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Official Records

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Monday, 20 September 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 125 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/54/333/Add.2)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/54/333/Add.2, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/54/333 and addendum 1, Sierra Leone has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/54/1)

The President: The General Assembly, in accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting on 17 September 1999, will now take up agenda item 10, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", to hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I am deeply honoured to address this last session of the General Assembly of the twentieth century and to present my annual report on the work of the Organization. The text of the report is before the Assembly.

On this occasion, I should like to address the prospects for human security and intervention in the next century. In the light of the dramatic events of the past year, I trust that the Assembly will understand this decision.

As Secretary-General, I have made it my highest duty to restore the United Nations to its rightful role in the pursuit of peace and security, and to bring it closer to the peoples it serves. As we stand at the brink of a new century, this mission continues. But it continues in a world transformed by geopolitical, economic, technological and environmental changes whose lasting significance still eludes us. As we seek new ways to combat the ancient enemies of war and poverty, we will succeed only if we all adapt our Organization to a world with new actors, new responsibilities and new possibilities for peace and progress.

The sovereign state, in its most basic sense, is being redefined by the forces of globalization and international cooperation. The state is now widely understood to be the servant of its people, and not vice versa. At the same time, individual sovereignty — and by this I mean the human rights and fundamental freedoms of each and every individual, as enshrined in our Charter — has been

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enhanced by a renewed consciousness of the right of every individual to control his or her own destiny.

These parallel developments — remarkable and in many ways welcome — do not lend themselves to easy interpretations or simple conclusions. They do, however, demand of us a willingness to think anew about how the United Nations responds to the political, human rights and humanitarian crises affecting so much of the world; about the means employed by the international community in situations of need; and about our willingness to act in some areas of conflict while limiting ourselves to humanitarian palliatives in many other crises whose daily toll of death and suffering ought to shame us into action.

Our reflections on these critical questions derive not only from the events of the past year but from a variety of challenges that confront us today, most urgently in East Timor. From Sierra Leone to the Sudan to Angola to the Balkans and to Cambodia, and then to Afghanistan, there are a great number of peoples who need more than just words of sympathy from the international community. They need a real and sustained commitment to help end their cycles of violence and launch them on a safe passage to prosperity.

While the genocide in Rwanda will define for our generation the consequences of inaction in the face of mass murder, the more recent conflict in Kosovo has prompted important questions about the consequences of action in the absence of complete unity on the part of the international community. It has cast in stark relief the dilemma of what has been called "humanitarian intervention": on one side, the question of the legitimacy of an action taken by a regional organization without a United Nations mandate; on the other, the universally recognized imperative of effectively halting gross and systematic violations of human rights with grave humanitarian consequences.

The inability of the international community in the case of Kosovo to reconcile these two equally compelling interests — universal legitimacy and effectiveness in defence of human rights — can be viewed only as a tragedy. It has revealed the core challenge to the Security Council and to the United Nations as a whole in the next century: to forge unity behind the principle that massive and systematic violations of human rights — wherever they may take place — should not be allowed to stand.

The Kosovo conflict and its outcome have prompted a wide debate of profound importance to the resolution of conflicts, from the Balkans to Central Africa to East Asia. And to each side in this critical debate, difficult questions can be posed.

To those for whom the greatest threat to the future of international order is the use of force in the absence of a Security Council mandate, one might ask, not in the context of Kosovo but in the context of Rwanda, if, in those dark days and hours leading up to the genocide, a coalition of States had been prepared to act in defence of the Tutsi population, but did not receive prompt Council authorization, should such a coalition have stood aside and allowed the horror to unfold?

To those for whom the Kosovo action heralded a new era when States and groups of States can take military action outside the established mechanisms for enforcing international law, one might ask: is there not a danger of such interventions undermining the imperfect, yet resilient, security system created after the Second World War, and of setting dangerous precedents for future interventions without a clear criterion to decide who might invoke these precedents and in what circumstances?

In response to this turbulent era of crises and interventions, there are those who have suggested that the Charter itself — with its roots in the aftermath of global inter-State war — is ill-suited to guide us in a world of ethnic wars and intra-State violence. I believe they are wrong.

The Charter is a living document whose high principles still define the aspirations of peoples everywhere for lives of peace, dignity and development. Nothing in the Charter precludes a recognition that there are rights beyond borders. Indeed, its very letter and spirit are the affirmation of those fundamental human rights. In short, it is not the deficiencies of the Charter which have brought us to this juncture, but our difficulties in applying its principles to a new era — an era when strictly traditional notions of sovereignty can no longer do justice to the aspirations of peoples everywhere to attain their fundamental freedoms.

The sovereign States that drafted the Charter over a half century ago were dedicated to peace, but experienced in war. They knew the terror of conflict, but knew equally that there are times when the use of force may be legitimate in pursuit of peace. That is why the Charter's own words declare that "armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest". But what is the common interest? Who shall define it? Who will defend it — under

whose authority and with what means of intervention? These are the monumental questions facing us as we enter the new century. While I will not propose specific answers or criteria, I shall identify four aspects of intervention which I believe hold important lessons for resolving future conflicts.

First, it is important to define intervention as broadly as possible, to include actions along a wide continuum from the most pacific to the most coercive. A tragic irony of many of the crises that continue to go unnoticed and unchallenged today is that they could be dealt with by far less perilous acts of intervention than the one we witnessed recently in Yugoslavia. Yet the commitment of the international community to peacekeeping, to humanitarian assistance and to rehabilitation and reconstruction varies greatly from region to region and crisis to crisis.

If the new commitment to intervention in the face of extreme suffering is to retain the support of the world's peoples, it must be, and must be seen to be, fairly and consistently applied, irrespective of region or nation. Humanity, after all, is indivisible. It is also necessary to recognize that any armed intervention is itself a result of the failure of prevention. As we consider the future of intervention, we must redouble our efforts to enhance our preventive capabilities, including early warning, preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament.

A recent powerful tool of deterrence has been the actions of the Tribunals for Rwanda and for the former Yugoslavia. In their battle against impunity lies a key to deterring crimes against humanity. With these concerns in mind, I have dedicated the introductory essay of my annual report to exploring ways of moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Even the costliest policy of prevention is far cheaper, in lives and in resources, than the least expensive of armed force.

Secondly, it is clear that sovereignty alone is not the only obstacle to effective action in human rights or humanitarian crises. No less significant are the ways in which the States Members of the United Nations define their national interest in any given crisis. Of course, the traditional pursuit of national interest is a permanent feature of international relations and of the life and work of the Security Council. But I believe that as the world has changed in profound ways since the end of the cold war, our conceptions of national interest have failed to follow suit.

A new, more broadly defined, more widely conceived definition of national interest in the new century would, I am convinced, induce States to find far greater unity in the pursuit of such basic Charter values as democracy, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law. A global era requires global engagement. Indeed, in a growing number of challenges facing humanity, the collective interest is the national interest.

Thirdly, in the event that forceful intervention becomes necessary, we must ensure that the Security Council, the body charged with authorizing force under international law, is able to rise to the challenge. As I said during the Kosovo conflict, the choice must not be between, on the one hand, Council unity and inaction in the face of genocide, as in the case of Rwanda and, on the other, Council division and regional action, as in the case of Kosovo. In both cases, the States Members of the United Nations should have been able to find common ground in upholding the principles of the Charter and in acting in defence of our common humanity.

As important as the Council's enforcement power is its deterrent power. Unless it is able to assert itself collectively when the cause is just and when the means are available, its credibility in the eyes of the world may well suffer. If States bent on criminal behaviour know that frontiers are not the absolute defence and if they know that the Security Council will take action to halt crimes against humanity, they will not embark on such a course of action in expectation of sovereign impunity.

The Charter requires the Council to be the defender of the common interest, and unless it is seen to be so in an era of human rights, interdependence and globalization, there is a danger that others could seek to take its place. Let me say that the Council's prompt and effective action in authorizing a multinational force for East Timor reflects precisely the unity of purpose that I have called for today. Already, however, far too many lives have been lost and far too much destruction has taken place for us to rest on our laurels. The hard work of bringing peace and stability to East Timor still awaits us.

Finally, after the conflict is over, in East Timor as everywhere, it is vitally important that the commitment to peace be as strong as the commitment to war. In this situation, too, consistency is essential. Just as our commitment to humanitarian action must be universal if it is to be legitimate, so our commitment to peace cannot end with the cessation of hostilities. The aftermath of war

requires no less skill, no less sacrifice and no fewer resources in order to forge a lasting peace and avoid a return to violence. The Kosovo Mission and other United Nations missions currently deployed or looming over the horizon present us with just such a challenge.

Unless the United Nations is given the means and the support to succeed, not only the peace, but the war, too, will have been lost. From civil administration and policing to the creation of a civil society capable of sustaining a tolerant, pluralist, prosperous society, the challenges facing our peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace-building missions are immense. But if we are given the means — in Kosovo, in Sierra Leone and in East Timor — we have a real opportunity to break the cycles of violence, once and for all.

We leave a century of unparalleled suffering and violence. Our greatest, most enduring test remains our ability to gain the respect and support of the world's peoples. If the collective conscience of humanity — a conscience which abhors cruelty, renounces injustice and seeks peace for all peoples — cannot find in the United Nations its greatest tribune, there is a grave danger that it will look elsewhere for peace and for justice. If it does not hear in our voices, and see in our actions, reflections of its own aspirations, its needs and its fears, it may soon lose faith in our ability to make a difference.

Just as we have learned that the world cannot stand aside when gross and systematic violations of human rights are taking place, so we have also learned that intervention must be based on legitimate and universal principles if it is to enjoy the sustained support of the world's peoples.

This developing international norm in favour of intervention to protect civilians from wholesale slaughter will no doubt continue to pose profound challenges to the international community. Any such evolution in our understanding of state sovereignty and individual sovereignty will, in some quarters, be met with distrust, scepticism and even hostility. But it is an evolution that we should welcome.

Why? Because, despite its limitations and imperfections, it is testimony to a humanity that cares more, not less, for the suffering in its midst; and a humanity that will do more, and not less, to end it. It is a hopeful sign at the end of the twentieth century.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his presentation.

We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 10.

Agenda item 9

General debate

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker in the general debate, I should like to remind members of the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 17 September, that congratulations should not be expressed inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered.

In this connection, may I remind members of another decision taken by the Assembly at the same meeting: that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, would leave the Assembly Hall through Room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

I should also like to remind representatives that in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed on Wednesday, 22 September 1999, at 6 p.m. May I request delegations to be good enough to provide estimated speaking times that are as accurate as possible. This will facilitate the work of the General Assembly.

I should now like to recall for the attention of Members paragraph 21 of the annex to resolution 51/241, whereby the General Assembly indicated a voluntary guideline of up to 20 minutes for each statement in the general debate. Within this given time-frame, I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that the interpretation may be provided properly.

The first speaker in the general debate is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Luiz Felipe Lampreia. I give him the floor.

Mr. Lampreia (Brazil) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): Brazil congratulates you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Your personal record in defence of democracy and human rights, which was forged in the struggle of the people of Namibia for liberty and self-determination, offers an inspiring example for our work.

As a sister nation of Uruguay, we take pride in the work done by your predecessor, my friend, Minister Didier Opertti. I would like to express the appreciation and gratitude of the Brazilian Government for his decisive role in presiding over the fifty-third session.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan is equally deserving of special recognition. In these times of far-reaching and uncharted challenges before the international community, his sense of proportion and the strength of his serene leadership have been valuable aids in the search for realistic and innovative solutions. We appreciate and support his endeavours in the cause of peace, development and justice.

The Brazilian Government warmly greets the admission of Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga, which have just joined the United Nations family.

Year after year, for over half a century, we have gathered here to discuss and debate the issues of our time. Year after year, the representatives of the Member countries of the United Nations have come to this rostrum to set forth their vision of global affairs and to provide analysis and to propose solutions.

As the requirements of our societies become ever greater over time, there grows a sense of an ever-widening gulf between our words and our deeds, a distance that serves only to feed the scepticism of some and the pessimism of others.

Whenever an unfolding crisis and its human tragedy break through international indifference and become newsworthy, it is to the United Nations that the public opinion of our countries looks for meaningful answers.

Unfortunately, however, the international community feels compelled to act in a coordinated fashion, mobilizing the necessary resources and political will, only when long-festering problems threaten to get out of hand, making a satisfactory solution all the more difficult.

The upshot is a sense of frustration and impatience towards the United Nations. This may be because the necessary initiatives are in the end adopted outside the United Nations framework, as was the case in Kosovo. Or it may be because the measures agreed are not up to the concrete needs, as we have seen in East Timor. Or it may even be because the United Nations finds itself once again confronted, as in Angola, with well-known conflicts of catastrophic proportions that the international community has failed to address in a timely manner.

Why is it that certain predicaments generate intense mobilization of ways and means, but not others? Why does human suffering in some parts of the globe fuel greater indignation than when it takes place elsewhere? The plight of Angola and that of East Timor offer two glaring examples of what amounts to a clear pattern of one-sided and unequal attention.

In Angola, UNITA's refusal to abide by the Lusaka Protocol and hardened positions threaten to rekindle in all its intensity the same civil war that over a quarter of a century has caused incalculable suffering to millions in that country, particularly the defenceless and the deprived.

In Angola, which has special bonds with Brazil, the international community is squarely faced — despite the limited international press coverage — with an immense political challenge and a humanitarian disaster of shocking proportions. Urgent and priority action is called for. The Security Council can no longer allow its resolutions to be blatantly ignored, as has been the case.

No less urgent — and in this case the United Nations is now actively engaged — is the task of helping guarantee the right of the East Timorese people to decide their own future as an independent nation, a decision unmistakably voiced in a free ballot. Brazilian society, which shares linguistic, cultural and historic ties with the Timorese, joined in their rejoicing when the vote returned a resounding verdict for independence. There was consternation in Brazil at the violence against our brothers in East Timor and at the loss of innocent lives that followed.

Brazil cannot accept, nor can Brazilian citizens understand, that the self-determination of the Timorese people is not fully assured. We therefore believe that the multinational force authorized by the Security Council — a force in which Brazil was determined to participate from the very outset — will put a stop to the atrocities committed since the popular ballot and will be able to re-establish the necessary conditions for a peaceful transition to independence.

Over the past decade, Latin America, long viewed as a land of backwardness and dictatorships, has fashioned a new international image for itself through the transformations it has undergone. The return to

democracy in our countries has had a decisive role in this, as did our important achievements in fostering respect for human rights — although much remains to be done. The adoption of consistent economic policies, in turn, has made it possible to overcome the endless dilemmas that had ensnared us, and to put an end to the inflationary spiral that had brought so much uncertainty and injustice to our citizens.

Let there be no doubt that the difficulties that we experienced, on and off, throughout 1999 will not cause us to lose faith and relinquish our achievements. For a few days, or maybe weeks, at the beginning of the year, Brazil was dubbed by some "the sick man of Latin America". It was thought that we might slip back into the trap of high inflation, that we would experience deep recession, that we would once again resort to the panacea of stoking short-term growth and return to the old boom-and-bust cycles of the past.

Yet we have arrived at the end of the century with an inflation rate under 8 per cent. We fully expect to embark on a course of sustained annual growth of more than 4 per cent and are set to bring to completion a large-scale modernization programme by means of important reforms in tax, fiscal and social security matters. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso will not flinch in his determination to lay the groundwork for our country to become modern, economically fit and dynamic, as well as socially more just and politically mature.

With the advent of democracy, Brazil and Argentina have developed the solid friendship that binds our peoples, and have over a short space of time built a lasting monument to integration. Our bilateral agreements in the field of nuclear coopération are exemplary and a stabilizing force in the region and worldwide. The Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — which our two countries joined Paraguay and Uruguay in establishing and with which the democracies of Bolivia and Chile have associated themselves — has fundamentally altered the economic face of the hemisphere and indeed of the world. Our integration process is not directed against anyone, but, on the contrary, seeks to strengthen our historical ties both within and beyond the Americas. Both individually and within the framework of MERCOSUR our countries have become a powerful force in the drive to set the international trade system on a more open, balanced course, one that no longer aids and abets protectionist privileges at the expense, more often than not, of developing countries.

Democracy has made it possible for the countries of Latin America to provide mutual assistance — without undue and unsolicited foreign interference and in a spirit of collaboration — whenever there is a jointly perceived threat to the institutional stability of one of them. Thanks to democracy, the countries of our region have successfully solved disputes that for long disturbed the harmony of the more peaceful and stable of continents. At the end of last year, Ecuador and Peru, with the diplomatic support of Brazil, Argentina, Chile and the United States, signed in Brasilia the agreements that put an end to their long-running boundary dispute. Thus, despite all manner of difficulties, Latin America is transforming itself into a tightly knit entity that is politically, economically and socially integrated.

It is in this spirit of integration, and in the abiding awareness that we belong to one family, that Brazil feels closely attuned to the various efforts at renewal under way in the region. The elections scheduled for next October in Argentina will no doubt confirm the political vitality of this great neighbour of ours and guarantee the necessary economic conditions for stability and reinvigorated growth. These same favourable expectations, we are sure, will be fulfilled at the elections to be held in Chile and in Uruguay this year, and in Mexico next year. Their outcome will most certainly underline the democratic character of Latin America.

The political and economic achievements of Bolivia since the 1980s in overcoming obstacles that 20 years ago seemed insurmountable are a further indication of how much our region has changed for the better. Peru as well has gained international recognition through its resounding successes in reversing the adverse economic trends of past decades and in the war against terrorism and drug trafficking. This capacity to overcome obstacles is equally noticeable in Ecuador, where, with the support of international financial institutions, political forces will — through democratic and constitutional channels — undertake the needed reforms to overcome the present crisis. Paraguay, in turn, successfully dealt with a delicate political crisis at the beginning of this year and is moving steadily along the road of democratic institution-building and economic development. Brazil, as always, will continue to decisively support Paraguay in that endeavour.

Guyana provides a further demonstration, not only of our commitment to upholding and fostering democratic values, but equally of the integrationist spirit that inspires us. It is our hope that Suriname will join in the efforts

and achievements of the region in bringing about these positive changes. The transformations that Venezuela is undergoing have drawn great international attention. This process of change must be respected, for it clearly and legitimately reflects the Venezuelan people's desire for renewal. The expression of this aspiration through institutional channels is the best guarantee that the changes under way will stay on the track of respect for the norms, rights and duties that define democracy.

Brazil is also confident that the Government of President Andrés Pastrana, in Colombia, will persevere in its endeavours to bring peace to this kindred nation. Undue foreign interference would only aggravate an already complex situation, which it is up to the Colombians themselves to overcome.

It is on the success of our neighbours, in which we trust, that hinges the success of the Brazilian people and its Government in solving their own problems and in overcoming their own challenges, which are neither few nor small.

Organized crime and drug trafficking today pose a major challenge to democratic societies. They clearly represent a serious threat to the security of national institutions and to citizens directly, who pay with their own lives the intolerable price for this scourge of our times. The spiralling stockpile of and trade in small arms is closely linked to organized crime and drug trafficking. As its citizens find their lives daily at risk because of contraband firearms, Brazil gives the utmost priority to tackling this question. At the regional level we approved the important Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. We would like this Assembly to endorse the proposal to hold an international conference on illicit arms trafficking in all its aspects. Similarly, Brazil attaches considerable importance to the work being done on a draft convention against transnational organized crime.

In turn, the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction remains a threat to the security and even the survival of humankind.

All actions contrary to the aims of the non-proliferation regime should be firmly condemned by the international community. At the same time, it behooves the nuclear-armed States, as well as the threshold States, to move towards the complete and irreversible elimination of nuclear armaments. For this reason, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden will once again submit, at this session, a draft resolution on a new agenda for nuclear disarmament. The draft resolution, which seeks to pave the way for a constructive dialogue on this issue, is grounded on a realistic and balanced appraisal of the nature of the nuclear disarmament process.

Our countries' democratic institutions and the international organizations, particularly the United Nations, face fundamental challenges today. Our countries are confronted daily with economic difficulties and acute social grievances, such as poverty and extremes of inequality, which heighten impatience: impatience with economies unable to grow at a rate compatible with faster improvement of the well-being of societies; impatience in the face of vulnerability to crises and to turbulence in international markets; and impatience with political processes that sometimes appear slow to respond to the legitimate and pressing demands of citizens. It is vital, however, that this collective impatience be voiced and guided through democratic channels.

Brazil's commitment to democratic institutions and to the primacy of law also applies to international relations. At the outset of his second term of office, to which he was elected last October by an absolute majority of Brazilian voters, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso made it clear that:

> "The rule of law is the only admissible foundation for the international order. Should unilateralism and the use of force come to be accepted as organizing principles of international relations, in the long term it will be more rational to side with the instruments of power politics rather than to strive for order and to abide by law. If we are to see a truly new world order emerge, one of its cornerstones must be the acceptance that multilateral institutions — not least the Security Council — are the source of legality and legitimacy for those actions that guarantee peace and the peaceful resolution of disputes".

Our societies await, again with increasing impatience, seeing multilateral organizations, and in particular the United Nations, show themselves to be up to the challenge of playing a meaningful — in fact, crucial — role in establishing an international order attuned to the shared aspirations and values of humankind as a whole.

The road ahead calls for renewal and change. If the Governments of the world desire a strong and effective United Nations, they must not only change how they think and act with respect to this Organization, but they must also think and act to bring about change in the Organization. This is what is at stake. This is the challenge before us.

Address by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mbeki: On behalf of our Government and in my capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, I wish to extend our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on your election as President of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank you for the kind remarks you made about my country as you assumed your high position.

We have worked together for many decades. Thanks in good measure to your statespersonship, as neighbours we live together in peace and have joined hands as equals to ensure the all-round fulfilment of both our peoples. These experiences convince us that you will discharge your responsibilities as President of the General Assembly in a manner that will help humanity make our common world a better place for all. We are pleased that you will be working with the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, who has demonstrated unquestionable commitment to the realization of the attainment of the goals of the Organization.

The Charter of this Organization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provide all of us with the vision towards which we should strive. At the time these documents were adopted, they reflected the international determination to ensure that the catastrophe occasioned by the rise of fascism and Nazism should never recur. We recall them today because we believe that the time has come for determined measures to be taken to ensure that they inform what happens in the common world we all share. The central message they contain is expressed in the words of the preamble to the Declaration:

> "the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

We believe that the time has come for all of us to ensure that we work together to reconstruct human society in a manner consistent with this perspective. We further believe that what we have said constitutes a particular and historic challenge to those who occupy positions of political leadership in the modern era, those who, like us, will have the privilege of addressing this General Assembly. Only time will tell whether we have the moral and intellectual courage to rise to this challenge.

But this we feel we can say: that conditions exist in the world today for us successfully to pursue the vision contained in the United Nations documents to which I have referred. What may be in short supply is the courage of the politicians, as opposed to an abundance of good-sounding rhetoric. What are these conditions of which we speak? The cold war has come to an end. There is no sign anywhere of an ideology-driven contest among super-Powers which dictates that each should seek to destroy the other in order to protect itself. It is true that a number of countries still possess weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, which constitute a threat. The only logical way to address this is vigorously to sue for universal disarmament and the destruction of such weapons.

Secondly, I believe it would be correct to say that the overwhelming majority of countries in the world have opted for democratic forms of government. Having learned from their own experiences, the nations have turned their backs on dictatorship. Of course, we cannot say that such dictatorships do not exist or that no attempt will be made in the future to establish them. But we can make bold to say that these exceptions prove the rule, rather than disprove the proposition we are trying to advance.

The combination of these two factors should lead to three conclusions, at least. The first is that there should be no need on the part of any country to seek to establish

spheres of influence as a supposed necessary condition for the advancement of its national interests.

Secondly, the very sustenance of democracy across the globe requires that in every democratic country the ordinary people should feel that they actually do enjoy the right to determine their destiny. In other words, no country should be required to restrict its exercise of this right simply because some other more powerful country dictates that this should be so.

Thirdly, these circumstances create the possibility for a more democratic system of international governance, as would be reflected by a correct restructuring of this very Organization. In any case, the process of globalization necessarily redefines the concept and the practice of national sovereignty. The frontiers of that sovereignty are being pushed back, especially as regards the smaller countries of the world, such as our own. As this happens, inevitably, so does it become necessary that a compensatory movement take place towards the reinforcement of the impact of these countries on the system of global governance through the democratization of the system of international relations.

The developments we have spoken of also suggest that perhaps, and depending on what we all do, humanity has never had as bright a prospect for durable world peace and security as it does today. The mere spread of democracy throughout the world speaks of a greater commitment among the nations to the resolution of national and international conflicts by peaceful means.

I am certain that when President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the current Chairperson of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), addresses the Assembly, he will report on the important decision recently taken at the Algiers summit of the OAU to exclude from its ranks, with effect from the next summit, all military regimes that may still exist on the African continent. A further decision was taken to assist such countries resolutely to move towards a democratic system of government.

The developments on which we have commented would suggest that the Organization has a responsibility to focus especially on the objective contained in Article I, paragraph 1, of its Charter, which says,

> "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace ... and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

This, we believe, imposes a solemn and supreme responsibility on the United Nations to work for the prevention of conflicts and to endeavour to resolve them so that a durable peace can be established. Sometimes, our response to conflicts has been to wait for them to develop into violence, and even wars, and subsequently to intervene through costly peacekeeping operations. These, at times, serve to freeze those conflicts, perpetuate polarization and make their timely resolution more difficult.

Moreover, the requirement on the United Nations to make such interventions to prevent the outbreak of hostilities imposes an obligation on the United Nations that it should be seen by Governments and peoples as a truly even-handed interlocutor and peacemaker. It can attain this only if it works genuinely to

> "develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples",

as stated in Article I, paragraph 2, of its Charter.

If indeed we are seriously committed to these critical objectives of peace and democracy in the world, then we have no excuse to permit the further postponement of the meaningful restructuring of the United Nations. If we were honest with ourselves, we would admit that what is blocking progress is the desire to accommodate what are perceived as new power relations, to reinstitutionalize relations of inequality within the United Nations in an amended form. This is based on the thesis that the institutionalization of such relations has precedence over the Organization's founding principle of respect for the principle of equal rights among the nations.

In the situation of the cold war and the prevalence of dictatorship in many countries, the politics of power might have been seen as the only path to survival. The management of the world today through the exercise of such power, however modified, will itself subvert the objectives of democracy and peace, spawning pretenders to the throne at global, continental and regional levels.

Simultaneously as the United Nations focuses on the critical question of the prevention of conflict, so must it

attend to such issues as the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the implementation of the ban on anti-personnel mines, the removal of mines in those countries which face this problem and the control of the proliferation of small arms. Of course, none of these proposals gainsay the need for the United Nations to act with all necessary vigour to help end all existing conflicts of which it is seized, including those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Western Sahara, East Timor, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Kosovo and others.

We started off with a quotation from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which speaks of affirming the dignity and worth of the human person, the promotion of social progress and securing a better life for all. We argued that conditions exist for movement towards the realization of the objectives spelt out in the Declaration. It is a matter of common cause among all of us that the levels of poverty, ignorance and disease that continue to afflict billions around the globe constitute a direct denial of the dignity and worth of the human person to which we have committed ourselves. I am certain that we would also agree that the process of globalization has also been accompanied by growing inequality within and among countries. We have also seen how movements of short-term capital have produced disastrous economic consequences in some countries.

As with the challenges of peace and democracy, it is our firm belief that sufficient resources exist within the world economy actually to address the social progress and the better life for all for which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calls. Further to this, science and technology continue to develop in such a way that it is difficult to believe that, taken together with the large concentrations of capital that characterize the world economy, the means do not exist within human society to make the required impact on poverty, ignorance and disease. Indeed, it can be argued quite rationally that international peace, democracy and prosperity are a necessary condition for the further rapid growth of the world economy, and with it the further expansion of the corporations, both small and big, which require global markets.

Similarly, the revolution in information and communication technology, a critical driver of the process of globalization, both enables and calls for higher levels of education and standards of living among the billions who constitute the human population. However, it is clear that there is no automatic or inherent mechanism within the operation of the markets to enable both capital and technology to make the sort of impact we are talking about on all countries of the globe. When we say this we should not be taken to mean that we are contemptuous of all that has been said about what each country needs to do to create the conditions conducive to investment and technology transfers. Nor should it be taken to mean that we are reopening the debate about the role of markets in the allocation of resources. What we are saying is that the functioning of the markets does not and cannot exclude conscious interventions being made, both to increase economic opportunities and to raise the standards of living and the life possibilities of many in the world denied their human dignity by the scourge of poverty.

In his interesting book *Living on Thin Air*, the British author Charles Leadbeater, writes:

> "The new (knowledge driven) economy needs a mobilizing vision and institutions fashioned to make it real. Bit by bit, our institutions are changing through reform, reorganisation and restructuring — but the process is much too slow, haphazard and piecemeal — it must become more conscious, imaginative and radical."

Once more, the matter turns on the will of the political leaders actually to discover among themselves the moral and intellectual courage to do what is correct and necessary. What is correct and necessary also requires that in this field as well, which affects socio-economic matters, we should review the functioning of all multilateral institutions, including those that belong within the United Nations family. This should be done to ensure that these too reflect the very necessary imperative of the democratization of the international system of governance.

The United Nations documents to which we referred earlier give us a starting point. Accordingly, we believe that there is no need for anyone among us to rediscover a new vision that would inform our actions to build a new world which affirms the dignity and worth of the human person. What is necessary is that we match the beliefs we profess with the necessary action.

We speak of action that will practically address the related issues of peace, democracy and development.

I am certain that such a practical programme of action would meet the aspirations not only of the members of the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement, of which we are a member. It

would also respond to the most deep-seated feelings of the peoples of the developed North, who can have no interest in conflict, oppression and poverty, even if these occur beyond the borders of their own countries.

It also goes without saying that the democratic systems in which we operate would also require that, through committed advocacy, we should secure the support of the electors for what should be a programme of action of the United Nations for the twenty-first century.

The evolution of human society has presented the world leaders who will stand at this rostrum with new possibilities to move our globe a giant step forward towards a new actuality, of which the poor and the powerless dream every day. We will be betraying those millions if we do not act to turn their dream into reality. Let future generations not say that because of the force of inertia we failed to act.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bouteflika (*spoke in Arabic*): So it is Africa, through two of its most devoted and eminent sons, that has the particular honour of leading the United Nations into the new millennium. I refer to you, Mr. President, a worthy freedom fighter for our sister nation, Namibia; I now salute your well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I refer also to Mr. Kofi Annan, our Secretary-General, to whom the international community is indebted for the great perseverance and fervour he has shown in his promotion of the purposes and principles of the Charter and in strengthening the role of the United Nations.

I am very moved to address this Assembly, because, by electing me 25 years ago to the presidency at its twenty-ninth session, the General Assembly was even then showing its esteem for and interest in Africa and its consideration for all of those generations of freedom fighters who, like those of my country, have assumed the historic responsibility of making a decisive contribution to the advent of a better world. Twenty-five years have passed during which the inexorable movement towards freedom has followed its course, toppling the last bastions of colonialism and racial segregation, and enshrining the right to sovereign equality of States and the right of peoples to development, self-determination and independence.

At the same time, a new situation has emerged marked by greater interdependence between nations, which, as they have gradually become more and more aware of the unity of their destinies, can no longer afford to live in isolation nor remain indifferent or insensitive when something happens to one of their members.

I have therefore come to speak about this common destiny, on behalf of Africa and Algeria, at a time when our session has chosen the theme of the culture of peace and non-violence. Throughout this century, the world has constantly evolved, created, destroyed, reinvented itself and moved forward. Despite ideological conflicts and economic crises, political tensions and devastating wars, humanity has made its way inexorably towards one and the same history — one and the same destiny.

New challenges are today confronting the international community in a context occasioned by the easing of ideological struggles, the end of the cold war and the creation of a unipolar world, with its inherent paradoxes for development.

One of these challenges is what is today called globalization: a global economy, a global political system, even global values and aspirations — but also, global problems and dangers. In any case, implementation of globalization is encountering a variety of barriers and obstacles. On the economic side, unequal development between nations certainly does not facilitate the establishment of a universally accepted new world order. Worrying gaps are beginning to appear, especially

in Africa: a chronic deterioration in the terms of trade; a crushing weight of debt; fratricidal conflicts; environmental degradation; increasing unemployment; persistent epidemics; falling numbers of children in school; declining official development assistance and meagre direct investment. Furthermore, two thirds of the least developed countries and three quarters of the low-income countries are in Africa. In addition, 50 per cent of the continent's population live in abject poverty.

The thirty-fifth Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit showed that Africans were ready to face up to this miserable situation by working for peace, stability and cooperation and by entrenching political and economic reform more firmly. But it also revealed how insubstantial North-South cooperation is, showing that it is often limited by policies based on vested interests or selective intervention.

The Summit also pointed out the difficulties inherent in the social, cultural and psychological structure of our countries, with many misunderstandings resulting from the mechanical application of criteria adopted in developed countries not only in the economic but also in the political and cultural areas.

The problems which have still to be solved are therefore numerous, and the international community sees them every day in Africa, Asia, the Balkans and the Middle East. To these problems must be added the global controversy between the champions of an optimistic universality that easily tolerates the advent of and adjustment to a unipolar world, and those who retain a sense of their own identity and consider, rightly, that the interests of mankind lie in constructing a multipolar world.

These problems do not, however, mean that all hopes for harmonious globalization are purely utopian: they merely represent obstacles to an evolution which we know is unavoidable. What would be an illusion, however, would be globalization of the impossible, globalization that ignores the legitimate interests of humankind as a whole, because sooner or later that would be doomed to failure. The globalization of problems is a fact of life; that is why it is imperative for us to find global solutions.

It cannot be overemphasized how discouraging it is to see such a constantly widening gap between rich and poor and between rich countries and Third World countries that are stifled by debt. I certainly do not intend to complain to the Assembly about the many upheavals of a "Third Worldism" whose approach and methods are at least 20 years old and have become obsolete. The world is no longer as it was in the 1970s; it has changed radically. It seems to me, however, that this movement towards pluralism and the market economy should be continued and encouraged, and that it should be accompanied by a movement towards solidarity. In fact, I believe that the logic of power and confrontation that has marked the twentieth century should give way to a logic of solidarity that will make international relations more humane, based on fair exchange and shared prosperity.

The progress of nations would be incomplete if we restricted ourselves to seeking it solely through the market. We must also continue to seek it simply by promoting the most basic human rights. In sharing the idea of human rights, it must be made clear that the definition and observance of human rights must take into account the context of each of our States, with their differing traditions, social structures and priorities. For us, human rights are balanced by the duties of the citizen and governed by inescapable priorities. Apart from the struggle against poverty, disease and illiteracy — ensuring that every human being has the right to a decent and dignified life — is it not true that human rights also mean the protection of society from terrorism, drug traffickers and purveyors of death of every kind? In this respect, there are no discrepancies between our concerns and those of the developed world on the issue of democracy and human rights. Nevertheless, it remains true that these are issues of utmost importance and highest priority.

This is why we believe that the idea of the progress of the human race, and its emergence into the twenty-first century through the adoption of the laws of the free market, freedom of investment and other freedoms, cannot be separated from its progress through development aid and solidarity with Third World countries. In other words, our interest should be focused on the renewal of international action within the United Nations system so as to adapt it to the new world contexts, to help it respond to the legitimate expectations of the great majority of nations and to bring about renewed progress towards peace, stability, equity and shared prosperity.

I come from a continent where people need to have faith in justice, because they believe that the countries which exploited their resources to ensure their own development have a heavy debt to repay. They need to believe that, having given so much to building human civilization in the modern era, they have the right to

demand that their dignity and their humanity should be fully respected. I seek also to remind this Assembly that, by letting poverty proliferate in a world which is becoming increasingly interdependent, the rich countries and the community of nations are paving the way for disruptions in national life and for international relations that will be increasingly susceptible to threats of violence, conflict and discord, which are harmful to democracy and to economic activity.

I also wish to recall that the failure of the Third World, and of Africa in particular, to make itself heard — a failure reflected in the results of the Uruguay Round — does not augur well for solutions to all the problems that I have mentioned. Does our degeneration mean that we are irrevocably doomed to decline, and that the poverty of the majority is irremediably bound to dominate the coming century? I prefer not to believe that that is the case; I prefer to believe rather that recovery is possible so long as concerted and sustained action is taken in parallel with action by the United Nations.

Such action must have two tiers. The first tier lies with the industrialized countries because the solution to the Third World's problems is in their hands, as the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund rightly stated over ten years ago: they have sufficient economic, financial and legislative leverage to initiate reform and to restore an environment conducive to growth for the developing countries.

The second tier lies with the developing countries themselves, which must take on the essential task of becoming self-reliant by organizing their entry into the world economy and by following through with economic and political reforms. Unfortunately, they have no other choice.

It is against this background that Africans met last July in Algiers, where the thirty-fifth Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit was held. During this meeting, which enjoyed a record number of participants, Africans took stock of their achievements since independence, weighed up current reforms in the light of external forces and internal realities and laid down the foundations of a new approach to and a new vision of the future of the continent. Priority was given to concord and peace in Africa. Africa is determined to speed up the settlement of the conflicts between Eritrea and Ethiopia and in the Great Lakes region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone. Activities within OAU and the subregional organizations have been intensified towards restoring peace and putting an end to the suffering of the refugees.

Similarly, Africa has unequivocally stated that it supports international legality, democracy and respect for law, and accordingly it has set out the guidelines for the OAU position on the situations in Angola and in Western Sahara. It fully supports the United Nations initiatives there, as it does the OAU good offices in the Comoros, where it hopes that the Comoran people will proceed with democratic elections for their institutions so as to preserve the country's unity and territorial integrity.

A concern for peace and concord also underlies Africa's assessment of the Middle East peace process, which it hopes will come to a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution based on withdrawal by Israel from the territories unjustly occupied by it and on its recognition of the Palestinian people's legitimate and inalienable rights.

OAU is similarly concerned about peace and security in the Gulf, where economic sanctions that are disastrous for the affected populations should be lifted, as should those unjustly imposed against Libya and Sudan even though their Governments have fully cooperated with the relevant investigations.

The human race must enter the new millennium free of the disputes born of the historical vicissitudes of the tormented and tragic century now drawing to its close. In this context, hotbeds of tension and crises must be eliminated. The suffering of peoples who are still unable to exercise their right to self-determination and independence must end. The embargo imposed on the Iraqi people must be resolved in a less harmful way, as our Secretary-General of OAU would say, in keeping with United Nations resolutions. Terrorism, organized crime, drug and arms trafficking — which undermine relations between States and weaken peaceful and fruitful international cooperation — must be a top priority. New, ethical international relations should also be prioritized in order to usher in a new era of peace and common prosperity.

The Algiers Summit, however, did not restrict itself to expressing, clearly, Africa's desire to bring to an end the tragic phase of conflicts which are tearing it apart, and to go along, step by step, with the efforts of the international community to institute a just and long-lasting peace everywhere in the world. The Summit also studied economic and development issues within the framework

of the Abuja Treaty, consolidating macroeconomic reforms through the revival of sustained growth and through regional integration within the framework of African unity, the principle of which has just been enshrined by the Sirte special Summit.

The Sirte Summit reaffirmed OAU solidarity with and support for fraternal Libya concerning the need for a final lifting of the unfair embargo imposed upon it. It decided also to establish new rules and norms to facilitate the development of operational structures and modalities for OAU with a view to achieving effective union between the countries of Africa. Such a union will guarantee Africa's security and strengthen cooperation between its peoples, which will gain Africa the respect and status it deserves in the light of the heavy cost it has paid throughout history in sacrifice, slavery, exploitation and despoliation during the colonial era. Such a union will also promote Africa's material and human potential and all that makes it so different from the rest of the world. In short, the Sirte Summit has reaffirmed in full the right of Africa to be an active part of the globalization process. As a result, justice will be equal for all, and the new concepts introduced by globalization will be immunized against any form of injustice, abuse or exclusion.

The Summit also affirmed the necessity of advancing new reforms in the context of cooperation and partnership between the United Nations and OAU in all fields. Lastly, the Summit proposed a new ethics for international relations, where the requirements of production and competition should obscure neither the higher interest of humanity — whose very existence is under threat from all kinds of environmental degradation and other scourges affecting the natural world, humankind and human values and institutions — nor the rights of nation States to their integrity and sovereignty.

We do not deny the right of northern-hemisphere public opinion to denounce the breaches of human rights where they exist. Nor do we deny that the United Nations has the right and the duty to help suffering humanity. But we remain extremely sensitive to any undermining of our sovereignty not only because sovereignty is our final defence against the rules of an unjust world, but because we have no active part in the decision-making process in the Security Council nor in monitoring the implementation of decisions.

Furthermore, inasmuch as the sovereign state remains beyond dispute a place of social contract and the context within which human rights should be organized — political rights, as well as economic and social ones — the international community should favour stability as well as concord and the culture of democracy for our developing countries. But all this will remain a dream so long as the real issues at stake, those of economic and social development, have not been clearly set out, because, for Africa as for other continents, these issues are the crux of the matter.

The debate on the concept of interference in internal affairs consequently seems far from over, as at least three questions require exact answers: first, where does aid stop and interference begin? Second, where are the lines to be drawn between the humanitarian, the political and the economic? Third, is interference valid only in weak or weakened States or for all States without distinction? In any event, we firmly believe that interference in internal affairs may take place only with the consent of the State in question. We firmly believe that the countries of the South are capable of overcoming their difficulties, so long as solidarity, loyal assistance and the concern of the developed countries and the international community do not fail them.

Algeria has paid a very heavy price for democracy, and like other African countries must shoulder the high social cost of the reforms which it is undertaking. It has embarked upon a vast project of national renewal. It is working hard to ensure civil concord, enhance democracy, establish the rule of law and renew and modernize its judicial system and administration. In short, we are working to create conditions for the best possible use of the country's economic potential and for individual and collective well-being in a society where peace has been restored and where free enterprise, justice and dignity are guaranteed for all.

This is an enormous undertaking, but a necessary one after a decade of ordeals in what was a war in everything but name — a war that was inflicted on us, and which allowed terrorism and extremism to do violence against society, values, dignity and people's consciences. My country is re-emerging, slowly, from these tragic events, which were foreign to Islam. Many things have been said in various forums about this ordeal which engulfed my country — most often, alas, by people who are hostile to or who have only a superficial knowledge of Algerian society and its problems. I will refrain here from condemning anyone's opinions, but I do believe that when a people has been exposed to a tragedy like the one in Algeria, for a whole decade, and has faced up to it with the courage and tenacity which the

Algerian people have shown, then that people should at the least have the right to use its own Republic's institutions to defend itself.

Yes, my country has been wounded — the very flesh of its children has been wounded. Tens of thousands of them are dead — some victims of fanaticism, some victims of others' madness. In general terms, people have been victimized by the general confusion that nearly brought the Republic to its knees, hence Algeria's overwhelming desire to defend its existence.

In this context of passions unleashed, disorder, the instinct for murder, the marginalization of society, devastating nihilism and blood and tears, men, women and children have lived through untold suffering and the country's infrastructure has been flagrantly and blindly destroyed, with extremely negative effects on our economy.

Today the Algerian people are licking their wounds. The main thrust of our national recovery is civil concord; this shows the innate magnanimity of our people and our unshakeable commitment to the lofty values of tolerance which characterize true Islam. Today, the Algerian people are rejecting violence because it is not part of our tradition. They are committed to pivotal human rights, as they were during their struggle for independence and during the building of their country. They proved this in the referendum of 16 September by saying a resounding "yes" to the law on civil concord adopted by the Parliament in July. They proved this also by opening their hearts and extending the hand of generosity to those who had defied society and the laws of the Republic. They are proving it through their reliance on the law, itself increasingly inspired by the lofty ideals of the State of law and which, without being repressive, may not be broken by anyone, including the State. They have proved it because, true to their own selves, they know that peace and solidarity alone are the keys to economic and social progress.

The principles which we are recommending in international relations we are also resolutely endeavouring to implement at home, on a national level. With the restoration of peace, we shall consolidate all freedoms. We will irreversibly establish a culture of democracy and pluralism. We are currently committed to eliminating all bureaucratic obstacles to free economic activity throughout the country, endeavouring in this way to establish the rules of social liberalism and the market economy.

On a regional level, we are pursuing negotiations with the European Union on an association agreement and on the Barcelona process. We shall spare no effort in relaunching the project to construct an Arab Maghreb Union on the basis of renewed inspiration, rational action and realistic aims established in such a way as to ensure a viable, reliable and long-lasting institution. Like other countries, Algeria will pursue its negotiations to become a member of the World Trade Organization. On an African level, it will work unceasingly towards the advancement of the economic integration agreements reached within the framework of the Organization of African Unity; to settle the conflicts that are tearing the continent apart; and to promote long-lasting peace, which is favourable to sustained development.

In short, Algeria believes that in order to contribute in a useful manner to the future of the world, the peaceful settlement of conflicts, international stability, solidarity between nations and equity in international relations, Algeria must adapt to the economic and political realities of this world, modernize, reinforce and liberalize the general framework within which its economy operates, encourage private investment and ensure equal opportunity for all its citizens while ensuring their human development. This comprehensive and coherent action will be taken by my country in order to adapt to the way the world is now, so that it can succeed and so that it can gain its rightful place among the nations of the world, a place we first won thanks to our tradition of support for the ideals of this Organization.

Algeria is slowly but surely beginning to get back on its feet. It has entered a period of convalescence. It has done so thanks to its people's potential, vitality and energy and, thanks also to the solidarity shown by many sister nations and friends throughout the world. From this rostrum let me express the Algerian people's deep gratitude for and recognition of that solidarity.

We are at the end of one century and on the threshold of the next. We are at the end of one millennium and on the threshold of another. I share to some extent the belief that these milestones of our era do have an impact on the life and evolution of the human race.

The twentieth century has had its moments of glory, notably in bringing colonialism to an end, in combating racism and in eliminating apartheid. But it has also had its setbacks and failures, manifested in persistent underdevelopment, in the not always successful struggle

to eliminate poverty and in the never-ending quest for better concord between peoples.

Will we draw enough inspiration from these milestones to turn around mindsets that still rigidly abide by outdated concepts of international life? Will we be able to hold out a fraternal hand to each other so that well-being can be better shared out in the world? Will we be capable of preparing a world for future generations that is better than the one in which we live? We can answer all these questions with a "yes", and it is with these optimistic words of hope that I conclude my statement.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Republic of Algeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency Mr. Sam Nujoma, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nujoma: Mr. President, the United Nations is no foreign territory to you. For 14 difficult and challenging years, you valiantly waged a diplomatic struggle at the United Nations for the freedom of our people and the independence of our country. Your sterling personal efforts and unflinching commitment could not be better crowned. The people of the Republic of Namibia are very proud to see you preside over the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. On their behalf and indeed on my own, I express our deep gratitude to all United Nations Member States for electing you President at this session.

Mr. President, as you assume this very important office, you follow in the memorable footsteps of Mongi Slim of Tunisia, Alex Quaison-Sackey of Ghana, Angie E. Brooks of Liberia, Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, Salim Ahmed Salim of Tanzania, Paul J. F. Lusaka of Zambia, Joseph N. Garba of Nigeria and Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire. These distinguished sons and daughters of Africa presided over the General Assembly between 1961 and 1994. They did Africa proud and they served the international community well. You should heed the views of all United Nations Member States, large and small, rich and poor. In that way, you will have maintained and advanced even further the integrity and importance of this most representative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly. I assure you, Mr. President, that you can always count on the loyal and unqualified support of the Namibian delegation.

During your term of office, you will be flanked by another illustrious and committed son of Africa, Mr. Kofi Annan, one who hails from Ghana, a country which lit the torch of Africa's decolonization. To you, Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations, I express my Government's fullest support. The Government and the people of Namibia particularly commend you for your determined efforts aimed at promoting the peaceful settlement of conflicts and bringing relief to the needy in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

I wish to add my voice to that of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), my brother and colleague, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. He placed the demands and expectations of the African people before this body, as well as their resolve to face up to the challenges which confront Africa. Guided by the spirit of the recent OAU summit held in Algiers, President Bouteflika talked about a continent which is confronted by development constraints, but whose people have not lost hope: a people who are industrious, but whose efforts to make Africa achieve its potential are being impeded by social and economic problems. It is some of these challenges that I wish to address.

Today, economic disparity, debt burden, social injustice, unemployment, refugee problems and environmental degradation have become unacceptable hardships in various regions of the world. One may ask whether these burdens of deprivation have become a status quo for the majority of people in the developing countries? Have we concluded that there are not enough resources to educate every woman, man and child in this world and to keep them healthy and productive? Can all the technological achievements that are now at our disposal not be put at the service of all humanity? Words

of reason have been spoken, saying that those who are affluent today owe their tomorrow to those who live in deprivation.

It has been argued that the solution to underdevelopment is globalization and liberalization of the world economy. This forces all of us to be equal, while, in fact, we are not. I believe that for globalization to work it must be transformed from a mere concept into reality. It must be a collective undertaking for the benefit of all. It is only logical and, indeed, morally right that no man, woman or child should go hungry while others are basking in prosperity. Globalization should not amount to protected and selective prosperity. If so, international peace and stability will be jeopardized. As long as over a billion people live in abject poverty, lack access to clean drinking water and do not know how to read and write at all, the benefit of globalization will not be universal. And the reality of inequality of States must be at the centre of any discussions of the world economy. The United Nations can and should help developing countries to maximize the benefits from a globalized economy.

The biggest menace of the twentieth century has been the unacceptably high and ever-increasing poverty that denudes humanity of its dignity. I wish to recall that among the commitments made during the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, was the commitment to halve poverty levels by 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa requires a growth rate of 7 per cent annually if we are to achieve those levels. The future looks bleak, but the determination is strong to overcome all odds and succeed.

Africa carries 10 per cent of the world's population, but produces only 1 per cent of the world's gross domestic product. Foreign direct investment in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at a meagre 3 per cent of all total foreign direct investment. With most of the least developed countries being in Africa, this vast, rich but underdeveloped continent continues to challenge our Organization. Poverty and disease have all become much talked about to depict the situation in many parts of Africa. Armed conflicts in various parts of Africa continue to strip our continent of its human and natural resources. This overshadows the overall achievements that Africa continues to make. Africa today is democratizing and undertaking economic reform to maximize social and economic prosperity for its people. And, indeed, some significant economic growth has been recorded in a large number of countries.

However, political and economic reforms in themselves will not deliver sustained economic growth. Increased foreign direct investment is very important to complement these reforms and to sustain the current growth rate. Only then can the lives of the African people improve. Let me emphasize that foreign direct investment should not replace official development aid. In the short term, foreign aid will be a necessary complement to Africa's own efforts for recovery and development of its people.

In 1990 I attended the World Summit for Children, here at the United Nations, as the newly elected President of the Republic of Namibia. I feel proud to say that we were among the first countries in Africa to complete our national programme of action for the implementation of the Summit's outcome. Our Parliament ratified — and, in fact, most of Africa has ratified — the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose tenth anniversary we are about to commemorate. This embodies the legal standard with which we should comply in ensuring that children reach their fullest potential. Yet, to our dismay, too many children are being denied their childhood.

When a child is subjected to armed conflict, with each and every right being taken away, then that child is placed on an equal footing with adults. And when that course takes effect, then, regrettably, society has stooped to its lowest and the rest of humanity cannot and should not stand idly by. We can and must prevent conflicts from occurring, so as to create an environment in which all children can live, play and grow up under safe conditions. Only through a culture of peace can we combat all forms of child exploitation and, in particular, put an end to the phenomenon of child soldiers.

I would therefore like to stress that if every square metre of land that is inaccessible because of landmines could once again become productive, many children, especially in Africa, would be spared from hunger. And if every child soldier in Africa carrying a gun can be turned into a student, Africa's future will have been secured.

On the eve of the new millennium, we can all look back with pride on the fact that humankind has made major strides towards the betterment of the living conditions of millions across the world. The information superhighway has changed for ever the way we do business. Much of the world is now fully connected through the Internet.

Notwithstanding all this, much of Africa is still struggling to gain meaningful access to knowledge and information. In addition to our efforts to become more "wired", we are now faced with the enormous challenge of ensuring that our countries are all Y2K-compliant before 31 December 1999, in order to avert disaster. Namibia calls on all those countries which have the resources and the necessary know-how to assist developing countries in dealing with this problem. The international community needs to share knowledge because it is mutually beneficial. Developed countries have nothing to lose and everything to gain by sharing information technology with the developing countries.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is eroding the socio-economic and developmental gains that many African countries have made. HIV/AIDS has been rated the number-one killer in many countries, including Namibia. My Government adopted a National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS for the period 1999-2004. The aim of our national plan is to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS significantly by strengthening efforts towards prevention and control. In addition to the existing Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional programmes, we have also undertaken other measures to ensure that there is no discrimination against all those living with HIV/AIDS. The international community should assist the efforts of the African Governments in the implementation of their national programmes to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Next June, we shall convene two special sessions of the General Assembly to review the progress made by Governments in the implementation of the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development, respectively. Let us use those opportunities to make equality among people a reality and social integration the norm, so that men and women can live together in equality and as partners.

In recent years, we have witnessed a number of positive developments in the field of disarmament. However, despite these developments, we remain concerned at the lack of tangible movement on the core issue of nuclear disarmament. The central problem is the determination by nuclear-weapon States, despite their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to retain nuclear weapons indefinitely. This is being done under the pretext that nuclear weapons are essential for national security. To make such a claim is a clear invitation to other States to acquire nuclear weapons under the same pretext, as by nature every State has its vital national security to protect. In practice, nuclear weapons have also become a means of exerting pressure on and blackmailing other countries. No State or group of States should have a monopoly on nuclear weapons. This is a new type of apartheid, which is unacceptable today.

In this century, international peace and security have been challenged by the barbaric conduct of a few individuals who have offended the very conscience of humankind by committing heinous crimes. Namibia wishes to record its firm stand against all acts, methods and practices of terrorism and reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of such acts. At the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Algiers, the African leaders adopted the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. Its elimination therefore requires the close cooperation of all United Nations Member States. However, international cooperation in combating terrorism, and the measures adopted to combat it, must be based on international law, the relevant international Conventions and, above all, conducted in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The reform of the Security Council constitutes one of the important components in the efforts to strengthen, revitalize and democratize the United Nations. The composition of the Security Council does not reflect the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations. Furthermore, it does not respect the principles of equitable geographical representation and the sovereign equality of States. In the existing Security Council, particularly in the permanent members' category, developing countries are grossly under-represented. To maintain such a situation is to erode the principle of democracy and fairness. Equally, a selective or partially reformed Council which overlooks the principles of equity and balance is against the spirit of the Charter.

My Government is therefore strongly in favour of the position that we must correct the existing imbalances in the composition of the Security Council. It must become a democratic and truly representative institution, unfettered by the unfair tendencies and practices of the past.

We support the expansion of the Security Council in both categories, permanent and non-permanent. Developing countries must adequately be represented in a reformed and democratized Security Council. Africa deserves at least two permanent seats and additional non-

permanent seats in the expanded Council. Namibia, being a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, supports a reformed Council of no less than 26 members. We do not support those who advocate a lesser number on the ground of effectiveness.

Experience has shown that the ineffectiveness or inaction of the Security Council has been due to the threat of veto by those who possess it, and not to the Council's size. As a matter of policy, Namibia is opposed to the veto, because of its undemocratic nature. It cannot even be overridden by law or by procedures, as is the practice in democratic countries. The exercise of the veto perpetuates differences between members of the Council. In some instances, it has greatly contributed to division and inaction in the Security Council. In other instances, it has even prolonged conflicts and human suffering. If the veto cannot be abolished now, its application should be progressively curtailed until it is removed altogether.

The question of Palestine remains at the core of the problem of the Middle East. Only when the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are restored can there be lasting peace. We welcome the resumption of the peace negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. I reaffirm my Government's unwavering political and diplomatic support for the Palestinian people under the leadership of President Yasser Arafat.

With the end of the cold war nearly 10 years ago, we all expected to share in the peace dividend. In this connection, it is regrettable that Cuba continues to be subjected to a cruel economic, financial and commercial embargo, which must be lifted forthwith. Namibia calls for the end of the embargo so that the people of Cuba can live in peace and prosperity with all their neighbours.

The people of East Timor have long yearned for their right to self-determination, freedom and independence. On 30 August 1999 their dream to determine their own future was overwhelmingly expressed in a referendum. The international community should assist the people of East Timor to complete the process towards statehood, peace, security and development. We welcome the decision of the Government of Indonesia to invite the international community, through the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force, to East Timor. We call on Indonesia to cooperate fully to ensure the success of that operation.

With regard to Western Sahara, my Government notes the progress made towards the holding of a free and fair referendum. We call on the parties, in particular the Kingdom of Morocco, to cooperate with the United Nations so as to enable the Sahraoui people to exercise their right to self-determination.

Despite the difficulties of the United Nations, my Government regards the Organization and its various agencies as the best possible instruments we have to promote world peace, international trade and increased cooperation. The admission of the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga has further strengthened our Organization. Namibia congratulates them and welcomes them into our fold.

In the current international climate, the United Nations is the only voice which can bring peace to strife-torn areas, bring development to those regions where is it needed most and settle disputes between States. However, to carry out its manifold tasks and duties effectively and efficiently, the United Nations needs money and resources from all Member States, without exception. In short, the United Nations must embody the hopes and aspirations of humankind and still reflect the realities of our times.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Georgia.

Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of Georgia, His Excellency Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Shevardnadze (*spoke in Georgian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I have stood upon this platform on many occasions, and I well remember every speech I have given here since 1985. This is perhaps because, first, I cannot conceive of any loftier rostrum in the world and, secondly, because my

personal political fate has always brought me here at times of great change. My most recent appearance before the General Assembly was in 1992, when I was already Head of State of my country, Georgia. That, too, was a moment filled with drama — one in which a new, independent State was going through a painful birth process.

Today, I am with the Assembly at the end of a stormy century, one which I would call the century of freedom. That is not because freedom has become a universal norm of life — regrettably, that is not yet the case — but, rather, because the concept of freedom has assumed pre-eminence on the scale of political values and also because it was, indeed, in our century that the worst enemies of freedom and democracy were defeated. Perhaps the most unanticipated and important of these events was the demise of the Soviet empire, which brought about the end of the cold war, the bipolar world and the post-war world order.

The collapse of empires follows a more or less similar pattern. Initially, centrifugal forces triumph, but later phantom pains for the lost territories begin to be felt in the metropolis and attempts are made to recentralize the former imperial space.

Yet historical experience demonstrates that designs to restore an empire inevitably remain the unfulfilled dream of imperial reactionaries. History cannot be turned back. However, in the arsenal of today's reactionaries there remains still one chance to partially, if not completely, return to past ways — by maintaining spheres of influence over the territories of the former empire. Here I do not mean spheres of interest, including strategic interests. Harmonizing interests in a civilized way is a normal international practice. The concept of spheres of influence, however, particularly within the context of globalization, represents an anachronism.

But let me return to the demise of the cold war and the bipolar world. As someone who happened to participate in this process, I think an explanation is in order since debate on how and why it all happened continues to this day.

I do not deny that the reasons for the end of the cold war were many and complex. Yet I want to especially stress the role of the new thinking, which was conceived even before perestroika. I am certain that no drawn-out economic hardships, not even any "Star Wars project", would have compelled the socialist camp to democratize within, or to take radical steps in the international arena to overcome the confrontation, if instead of Mikhail Gorbachev and his team, leaders who possessed the old mentality had remained at the helm of the Soviet ship of state.

Since I have mentioned Mikhail Gorbachev, I must send to him, a man who is an outstanding figure of our time, condolences for the death of his spouse, Raisa Gorbachev.

The new thinking of that period contained many elements, but we can generally describe it as a concept designed to make all spheres of political and public life more human.

In international relations, this implied, first and foremost, replacing the class-based ideological approach with ethically motivated decisions, in line with universal values. Only due to this new approach were the countries of the Soviet space and Eastern Europe able to make their democratic choices with relatively little pain. Without the new thinking it would have been difficult to conceive of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan or that truly epochal event, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the subsequent reunification of Germany and the liberation of Eastern Europe.

The old found it difficult to come to terms with the new. The two could not exist harmoniously together. Moreover, not everyone accepted the idea of replacing the class-based approach with the primacy of universal values. I remember that when I first expressed this concept to the Soviet diplomatic corps, it spawned aggressive clashes of opinion and upheaval across the entire Soviet space.

But has not this always been the case? Historically, changes of this scale were always preceded by paradigm shifts in human thinking — that is, new thinking had to occur first. This was the case in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when a new world based on scientific thinking was emerging, and also in the epoch of the Enlightenment, during which the ideas of equality and humanism gave birth to the theory and practice of a democratic state.

In the historical literature and memoirs dedicated to the end of the cold war, one often finds references to winners and losers. It is erroneous to frame this most complex event of global historical significance in such simplistic terms. For example, how can Russia be considered to have been "defeated" when it set forth the example to other peoples by creating its own independent

State? One might ask the same about other States which belonged to the so-called socialist camp and today are independent democracies.

Credit for the victory over the cold war equally belongs to the representatives of the former opposing camps who had in common the new thinking and a commitment to the noble idea of saving mankind from a nuclear nightmare.

If we talk of any loser at all, it was the old, stagnant thinking which was defeated, and a new common sense prevailed. Shifts in thinking should occur at every stage of human development. The end of the cold war is a highly significant intellectual breakthrough of the twentieth century.

The process of renovation of ideas is perennial. Stagnation is tantamount to backward motion. At the threshold of the new millennium, it is necessary that we once again develop a new thinking — new principles in the relationship between States and a new approach to common problems and threats.

Today, nearly a decade after the Iron Curtain was lifted and the cold war came to an end, one often hears scepticism expressed about this great liberal democratic revolution of the twentieth century. "What has changed, after all?" some ask. Indeed, it is high time that we thoroughly assessed what has happened and surveyed the myriad new opportunities that have presented themselves as a result of this tectonic shift, as well as the far-from-simple problems that up until now one would hardly ever think about.

My ancient country, Georgia, is one of those newly independent States which provide a good platform for observing both the virtues and shortcomings of the processes under way in this new, post-bipolar world.

Although the history of Georgian statehood stretches back more than three millennia, the vicissitudes of history caused us to have to begin building our nation State from scratch once again in the last decade of this century. The beginning proved especially difficult. The utter incompetence and inexperience of its first post-communist leadership threw Georgia into conflict and civil war. The result was complete economic collapse and the loss of even those token signs of statehood that we had inherited from the Soviet system. Georgia in fact found itself isolated from the rest of the world. All this was accompanied by an unprecedented criminal rampage the eradication of which took several years.

Georgia began to work its way out of this isolation in the spring of 1992 when it became a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and began to actively forge diplomatic relations with its neighbours and more distant nations. In fact, it was during this difficult period that our country — its people and leadership — made its choice. Georgia would set forth on the way towards building a free and democratic society based on a socially oriented market economy. Despite the serious barriers that continued to emerge along the way, Georgia never once departed from the course it set for itself.

The principles and practice of the construction of our democratic country did not go unnoticed by the international community. Under new conditions, when the bipolar confrontation was no more, international organizations were given the opportunity for their actions to span the entire globe, to help those States in need and to assist in their development. The United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Union and particularly the United States, Germany and Holland, as well as others, extended their help to us.

The year 1995 was indeed the turning point in Georgia's new era. With it came the adoption of a new democratic Constitution, as well as the holding of the first parliamentary and presidential elections. In the same year, we achieved financial stability and introduced a new national currency. At the end of that year, for the first time in Georgia's democratic development, growth in gross domestic product was recorded. Very importantly also, law and order prevailed in the country, and the rampage of crime was finally curbed.

It was in the same year, however, 1995, that the first blast thundered. It was a terrorist act targeting Georgia's head of State. This barbaric act signalled to the world that not everyone found Georgia's progress towards democracy to their liking, especially if Georgia were to succeed along the path of her choice.

Recent years have demonstrated that the positive trends in Georgia have become irreversible. From 1996 to 1997, the annual economic growth was around 11 per

cent, the exchange rate was stable and inflation continued to decline.

No less significant was the progress made in building democratic institutions and putting in place and enforcing the legal framework for a civil society. In this respect, it is no exaggeration to say that Georgia has travelled in several short years a distance that often requires decades. I am happy to say that as Georgia continues to improve its democratic institutions and develop its economy we are becoming a partner to others rather than merely a recipient of international aid. This is largely made possible through the new function that my country has been establishing for itself over the past few years.

For many decades the fuel-rich countries of the Caspian region and Central Asia were cut off from the rest of the world by impermeable walls. Now they have begun to seek alternative routes to deliver their wealth to the world market. The south Caucasus, especially Georgia, with its outlets to the Black Sea, has a pivotal location on the route along which cargoes are already being shipped between east and west and between north and south. Since April this year, oil has been flowing westward across the territory of Georgia via the new Baku-Supsa pipeline. In ancient times, Georgia was part of the great Silk Road. This function is reviving along with that vast highway that in ancient times traversed the continents, bridging peoples and promoting the diffusion of cultures and the exchange of ideas. I am referring to the great Eurasian space and relevant transport routes.

International organizations and individual countries have shown great interest in the idea of a rebirth of the great Silk Road. The European Union initiated the TRACECA and INOGATE projects, under which the construction of the transport infrastructure is funded and multiple alternative networks of oil and gas pipelines are being elaborated. The United States Senate recently adopted the Silk Road strategy support bill, introduced by Senator Brownbeck, which envisages providing assistance to the south Caucasus and Central Asian States to strengthen independence and democratic development, as well as to build a transport infrastructure that will include multiple oil and gas pipelines. In addition, the Japanese Government has developed a strategy for the new Silk Road. China and other States are also participating in the realization of this project. The countries of south Caucasus — Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia — signed partnership and cooperation agreements with the European Union that entered into force in June of this year. As for Georgia's progress in building a democratic society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, its accomplishments have been recognized by the Council of Europe, of which Georgia became a full-fledged member earlier this year.

As I said earlier, the modest successes we have enjoyed on the way towards independent development — that is, our participation in projects of global significance and our aspiration to integrate with international, regional and Euro-Atlantic institutions — have irritated and continue to irritate the reactionary forces that are scattered across the entire territory of the former Soviet Union, where they pose a serious threat to democratic regimes in the new States, including Russia.

The terrorist blast of 1995 was not an isolated incident. It was followed by other provocations and terrorist acts, which included another attempt on the President's life. Will these attempts to force Georgia's deviation from its chosen path continue? We cannot rule this out, since geopolitical shifts of this scale never proceed smoothly. The enemies of our country use the entire arsenal at their disposal, including buying politicians and even votes, in attempting to bring to power a regime that is more to their liking.

In the current conditions of globalization and increased interdependence, no country is immune to the contagion of economic crisis. Last year independent Georgia experienced first hand the repercussions of the negative global economic situation, especially when the financial crisis erupted in neighbouring Russia, which continues to play a major part in Georgia's foreign trade operations. Today we can claim with reasonable confidence that Georgia's young market economy and banking system passed this test worthily, and international organizations and friendly countries made major contributions to our ability to survive.

Unresolved conflicts and our violated territorial integrity remain Georgia's most painful problem — in other words, the very problem which is among the series of new threats that the international community has shown itself unprepared to deal with. As a result of the campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing conducted by Abkhaz separatists, with external military support, many civilians of Georgian and other ethnic extractions have been killed, and nearly 300,000 people have been displaced. Despite the aid that our Government, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other organizations provide, these innocent victims continue to live in conditions of extreme deprivation. These severely traumatized people, who have

been subjected to inhuman brutalities, demand protection of their most inalienable right: the right to live in their own homes. It is unfortunate that, unlike the confrontation in the Balkans, the Abkhaz conflict has been given no exposure on world television screens, and therefore the international community has little awareness of it. Having seen with my own eyes the brutalities committed there, I have no doubt whatsoever that people infected by the germ of hatred lose their humanity and behave in the same barbaric manner, be it in Kosovo, Rwanda or Abkhazia.

It is difficult to believe what has happened. With the help of foreign regular army units and mercenaries, the Abkhaz, who originally constituted only 17 per cent of the population, expelled the majority just because they were not Abkhaz, but Georgians, Armenians, Jews, Russians, Greeks or other ethnicities. This was accomplished alongside ethnically motivated summary executions and mass killings.

The involvement of international entities — the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Russian Federation and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General — has so far failed to produce tangible results. In my opinion, one of the reasons for the failure of all attempts to resolve this conflict is that what has really happened in Abkhazia has not yet been objectively assessed at the level of the highest international body — the Security Council, which the Charter mandates to act as the guarantor of security in the world. Is it not all too obvious that it is impossible to fight evil if one does not call it by its proper name — that is, if one does not assign an appropriate legal assessment to what has happened?

The 21 United Nations resolutions on the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, do not provide such an unequivocal assessment, despite the fact that the final documents of the OSCE's Budapest and Lisbon summits qualify the action of the leaders of the Abkhaz separatists as ethnic cleansing. Indeed, the sole objective of the separatist leadership, encouraged by reactionary external forces, was to change the demography of this autonomous republic. It is hard to imagine that a regime that has in fact attained its goal can be convinced through mere request and persuasion to allow the displaced to return.

I do not want to be misunderstood. We do not thirst for the blood of our Abkhaz brothers, nor do we seek vengeance. No, I am sure that in time Georgians and Abkhaz will dwell together in their historic homeland: Georgia. But in order to speed up the process of the Georgian-Abkhaz reconciliation, the tragedy must be given its fair legal assessment.

It is no surprise that in a century in which the concept of freedom has acquired such scope, human rights command special attention. Before Georgia was accepted into the Council of Europe, rapporteurs scrutinized our human rights profile, examining how free the media were, the conditions of prisoners — including the worst offenders — and many other aspects of human rights. We are grateful to the Council of Europe and other international bodies and non-governmental organizations for their undiminished attention to this critical aspect of life in our country, and for their unbiased assessments and recommendations.

Especially against the backdrop of such keen attention to matters of human rights, I find it hard to understand the indifference of the international community to the fate of the 300,000 people currently displaced from Abkhazia and to the flagrant violation of their basic right to live in their own homes. The matter is not whether or not help is being extended to these people. Of course, they would have been in far more difficult straits had the United Nations and individual countries not provided relief. But in terms of human rights the only response proportionate to their situation would be to assist them in restoring their inalienable rights — that is, allowing them to return to their homes and holding those who have violated their rights responsible, if only by giving an appropriate assessment of the acts of the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. Unfortunately, little has been done to this end.

Although expressing personal feelings is perhaps not appropriate from this podium, I find it difficult to repress my emotions when talking of completely innocent people expelled from their homes by brutal force fuelled by simple hatred. My heart is heavy. I was involved in the complex processes that brought an end to the Cold War. I believed, as did my co-thinkers, that the future world order, liberated from the confrontations between camps, would not permit injustice; that under the new conditions, the United Nations and the Security Council, at the pinnacle of our world's hierarchy, would be able to prevent individual assaults against civilized norms of existence.

The Assembly can imagine how disillusioned I was when ethnic purging of the Georgian population occurred, and, by the way, remaining unpunished within my own country. I addressed the Security Council twice with a

detailed account and explanation of what happened, but no substantial progress has yet been made, even in the formulation of its resolutions. Having experienced this disappointment, I believe it should have come as no surprise that I firmly supported the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operation in Kosovo, aimed at putting an end to ethnic cleansing, since I viewed that operation as the long-awaited manifestation of a firm stand against evil. At the same time, however, the action in Kosovo must not be interpreted by anyone as even indirect support of aggressive separatism. By no means. I have always believed that aggressive separatism and attempts to manipulate evolving democratic orders by use of force is one of the worst and most dangerous maladies of modern times.

Since the end of the cold war, during which the threat of nuclear war hung over our heads like the sword of Damocles, while local conflicts, despite their true causes, inevitably acquired an ideological tint, political analysts have made extensive efforts to determine the nature of the virus causing today's aggression and the causes of possible future clashes. The theories are extremely interesting, and the debates as to how well they correspond to reality will doubtless continue for years to come.

On the other hand, from even a brief glance at today's conflicts it is clear that virtually all of them are linked to an erroneous interpretation by ethnic minorities of the principle of self-determination, and to a likewise erroneous understanding by titular nations and their central authorities of minorities' rights with respect to that principle. In other words, either aggressive separatism or no less aggressive violation of the rights of ethnic minorities, and in some cases both, underlie these conflicts.

During such confrontations, a certain segment of the population becomes undesirable to a group of political adventurists. This "foreign body" is then removed through the policy of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide. Today there are hundreds of places in the world where some groups of individuals may come to entertain an ambition towards this manner of self- determination and apply the well tried — and, regrettably, in many cases successful — method, which I would call the method of demographic engineering. It is not difficult to foresee how chaotic our world can become and what torment millions of innocent people will suffer just because they are found to be ethnically inappropriate, so to speak.

Today, when the epoch of colonial empires has been relegated to the past, the issue of the integrity of the State and the self-determination of peoples demands new, clearer formulations to ensure that each side in a potential conflict fully realizes the limits of international legitimacy of its claims. In democratic States, with Governments equally representing the interests of all its citizens, self-determination must be regarded as the right to express oneself in a very broad sense, but only within the boundaries of a State which, on its part, respects these rights. There should be no talk of separation by the use of force and violation of territorial integrity.

Let me also add that the rationale provided by opposing sides to justify forcible redrawing of borders always centres around an alleged necessity to restore historical justice. History, which is hardly an exact science, is interpreted according to the respective interests of the sides involved. I believe that new thinking should have a say with regard to this matter as well. In international relations, perhaps, one must not overemphasize, or, to be more precise, blow out of proportion the role of historical precedence. That was precisely the intent of the Helsinki Accords, regarding norms for the inviolability of existing borders.

At the same time, there is nothing more fundamental to the formation of a national consciousness than the citizens' knowledge of their own history. And this acquires special significance in the present era of vigorous globalization. The efforts of individual peoples, particularly small ones, will not be enough to sustain world diversity.

The contribution of each nation, large or small, to the development of world civilization and culture is unique and special. So is that of my small country. The culture of every nationality is a singular phenomenon. Although the economy, the environment, the elimination of poverty, the management of demographic processes and sustainable development are the main challenges for us all, the time is also ripe to protect and preserve the national cultural heritage, which remains an ever present fountain to enrich and ennoble the human spirit.

The Georgians say "Let us save culture, and culture will save us". Universal homogenization, which endangers the identity of small nations, should be entered in the register of modern threats. I suggest that we develop a collective mechanism for their cultural protection.

Developments in recent years have clearly shown that the existing system of collective responsibility for

global security is still far from perfect. Certainly, since bipolarity has been overcome we have significantly improved the prospects for the successful activities of international organizations, especially the United Nations, whose decisions were often not enforced because of the rivalry between the two ideological blocs. Yet they are not always able to effectively address new perils. Order cannot be ensured unless negative sanctions are applied, and this is exactly what the United Nations is avoiding in every way. Although the United Nations Charter does provide for fairly strong mechanisms for ensuring security, such awesome word combinations as Chapter VII and the Military Staff Committee exist most often merely on paper. Surely the founders of the United Nations deserve praise for their wisdom and vision, but we should not forget that the mechanism they created for our collective responsibility for the world's fate was framed for a different time.

It must be admitted that, despite attempts to establish order in the world, the planet continues to live in a state of anarchy. On the other hand, the need for a tougher and more just order becomes increasingly more obvious. Most of today's threats go way beyond the scope of the competence of the nation-State. They are global in nature. No individual country can cope with them alone. Much as is the case within individual nations, the international community primarily needs the unanimity of its subjects in terms of their commitment to a set of fundamental principles. This seems to be expressed in many charters and conventions. In reality, however, it is not the case. The attitude towards terrorism can be cited as an example. Despite public statements condemning terrorism, it appears that many still allow it as an acceptable means for achieving political and other ends. How else can one explain that terrorists whose identities are known to all are not hiding in the woods, but, rather, are able to find shelter in different States?

Of course, it is true that the world does respond to some extent to threats as they occur. Individual States and alliances of States do make serious efforts to fight global ailments. Sometimes, as has just happened in Kosovo, they undertake such tasks as a coercion to peace. It is my position that no one has a moral right to denounce NATO for that operation, particularly those who, through their inaction, play into the hands of those who disturb the peace.

Yet this is not precisely what one would call a demonstration of collective responsibility. In such a case several democratic and developed — and therefore powerful — States undertake the stewardship of the rest of the world. Of course, we can only thank them for this. But it would be better for all if those who have undertaken responsibility for the fate of the world carried out their mission within the framework of a mechanism established by the international organizations. We have already proposed to expand the membership of the Security Council and address the issue of veto rights in order to adapt it to present-day requirements. In my view, the almost automatic use of the veto is unacceptable. In the bipolar world this practice largely cancelled out the possibility of conducting peace enforcement operations, because in those years any force represented, to some extent, one pole or the other.

With the end of the cold war, the possibility of using collective decisions to bring about peace reappeared. The decision taken against the aggression in Kuwait gave many the hope that from then on the Security Council would be bound by shared principles and that an ethical approach would prevail. There were other encouraging episodes as well. But in the case of Kosovo, a new cold breeze seemed to have begun to blow from the Security Council. Despite its humane motivations, the operation carried out by NATO — like any ethical action today — also contained a pragmatic component. Had NATO not intervened in Kosovo, the influx of refugees would inevitably have upset the fragile balance in that extremely important part of Europe. Perhaps a number of States would have been drawn into the conflict. We might even have witnessed a big Balkan war.

In today's world an ethical approach in international politics is justified from a pragmatic standpoint as well. It is from a position of morality that we should act if we want to do good for mankind. Morality should be the basis of our policy, and it should become the pillar of the new thinking of the twenty-first century.

We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's statement that measures to reform the Security Council will be taking place shortly and that the reform will enable us to act in accordance with the norms of international law when addressing regional conflicts in the future.

Regardless of the serious threats existing today, it would not be an overstatement to say that mankind has never in the course of history had a more singular opportunity to create a just world order and a more harmonious community of nations. True, occasionally confrontational rhetoric can still be heard, but I am

convinced that today's controversies between East and West are ghosts of the past, artificially grafted onto the present. One may argue that this is done mostly to camouflage the acute internal problems of individual States. The generation that ended the cold war, the most dangerous conflict in the history of mankind, without spilling blood, can find a common language between continents, States and individual people and, through civilized dialogue, shorten the route leading to the resolution of global problems today and in the future.

Now that we have overcome the dividing lines of the ideological confrontation, we must learn how to erase other lines that divide the peoples of our world into rich and poor, educated and uneducated. In this process too, a new approach and new thinking are critical. Those who spoke before me have already mentioned that globalization should not mean only access to markets, free trade across borders, free movement of capital and financial interdependence. All this should be paralleled by the globalization of responsibility for the fate of the planet and the realization that today's world is too small to allow for the painless coexistence of affluence and poverty. We must find ways to alleviate the burden of debt on the poorest developing States. Otherwise, the perpetual pressure of a shortage in financial resources will render them unable to emerge from poverty and, certainly, unequipped to build a free society.

Assisting them in building free societies is a pragmatic objective, not merely an ethical cause. In today's interdependent world the poverty of States will produce echoes of terrorism, drugs and crime in others. In order to be secure, the future world must consist of at least moderately well-off, free nations that will pursue transparent and predictable domestic and foreign policies. I recall appeals made by the leaders of many developed States at different international forums, including President Clinton's reassuring remarks at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, where he underlined the critical importance of relieving the debt burden on poor nations.

There are also appeals to the effect that we should enter the twenty-first century with developing and economically weak nations freed of the heavy burden of debt. We could, in fact, think of a 10-year programme designed to resolve the problem of debts right at the outset of the twenty-first century. This would be a most fair decision which, at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium, would become a kind of beacon guiding many a nation to a brighter future.

I have said many times that I am generally optimistic about the future of mankind. This optimism is grounded in the belief that we are slowly acquiring experience; we can learn and we can be transformed. The Marshall Plan and post-war Europe, which have vanquished the chimera of antagonisms and showed new ways of integration, are good examples of this.

In 1985, when many from this platform spoke of "star wars" and the end of humanity, I declared that the new thinking offered to the world not "star wars", but a "star peace". I thank God that this declaration did not remain simply a dream, and that mankind is gradually emerging from the nightmare of nuclear war, both on the ground and in the sky. This gives me reason to hope that humankind, equipped with the capacity for constant intellectual renewal, will live its next century with a single mind which will make it an epoch of peace and freedom, justice and universal harmony.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister of the French Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the French Republic.

Mr. Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister of the French Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the French Republic, Mr. Lionel Jospin, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Jospin (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. It attests to the esteem in which the international community holds you and your country. I would like to include in this tribute the Secretary-General, who bears the weighty responsibility of

promoting the universality of the Organization and the effectiveness of its action. Lastly, I wish to congratulate the three new Members of the United Nations. The great and fine ideal that the United Nations embodies is very much alive — of this I am firmly convinced.

The United Nations is undertaking a grand civilizing endeavour, a task that is constantly being challenged but ever necessary. To unite peoples to work together for peace and development, to affirm a body of legal rules framing relations among States and to achieve common standards: that is the goal of the United Nations — a civilizing goal.

That goal is achieved first of all through the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The role of the Security Council in this mission is more vital than ever, a pre-eminence it derives from the Charter. France will recall this fundamental rule as often as necessary. To be sure, there have been circumstances when an urgent humanitarian situation dictated we should act immediately, but such an approach must remain an exception. We must take care, as in the case of Kosovo, to reintegrate this action into the context of the Charter. Our fundamental rule is that it is for the Security Council to resolve crisis situations. For that reason, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's new strategic concept recalls that the Washington Treaty recognizes the primary responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of peace.

Indeed, the universal nature of the Organization is intangible. The United Nations must strive to respond to crises, wherever they may occur. While we have not hesitated to do precisely that in recent years and on several continents, I would like to express regret at the relative timidity of the Organization where Africa is concerned. The extent of the tragedies on that continent requires us to take more resolute action.

Universality is compatible with complementarity in action. In the interests of efficiency, the United Nations must encourage, in every part of the world, regional arrangements among States capable of handling crises in the first instance. Such is the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter. Tasks should be realistically shared between the regional organizations and the Security Council without weakening the latter's authority. For instance, my country has, through the RECAMP programme, along with others, strengthened African peacekeeping capabilities through assistance provided under United Nations auspices in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity.

International security also demands continued disarmament in the context of multilateral and verifiable agreements. This is an ongoing objective for France, which hopes that the work of the Conference on Disarmament will be relaunched in the months prior to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. France would like to see the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the start of negotiations on banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear-weapon use, and the conclusion of a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. We would not support any development that might bring the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty into question and upset strategic balances.

The United Nations mission is not limited to the settlement of conflicts between States. With humankind's growing aspirations for greater freedom and responsibility, this mission extends to the safeguarding of human dignity, within each State and, when necessary — as the Charter allows — against States. State-instigated violence has spawned serious humanitarian crises over the past few years. Civilians have been targeted, whole populations have been forcibly displaced, and refugee camps are not longer secure. This is unacceptable. Consequently, we must uphold the principle of international intervention, under United Nations auspices, to assist the victims.

Every crisis recalls the need for the founding principle of working for peace and for respect for the law and the human person. A case in point is the conflict in Kosovo. Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which laid down the foundations of the settlement, illustrates these principles and this resolve.

We have set ourselves ambitious objectives: ensuring security for all, organizing reconstruction, ensuring coexistence between communities, transferring authority to local leaders, and promoting democracy and pluralism. The Secretary-General's Special Representative and the KFOR Commander have done remarkable work. Much, however, remains to be done. The atrocities must be stopped, the exodus stemmed and housing built before winter. On the political front, preparations must be made for the future, which will require establishing dialogue between the communities. Elections will, I hope, be held in the year 2000. France has made resolute efforts in this respect, alongside its partners in the European Union, which is providing half the international financing agreed upon by the conference of donors for Kosovo.

In East Timor, another people is asking that its rights be recognized. Overwhelmingly, it chose independence through a referendum. Some have tried to oppose that choice with violence. I therefore welcome the adoption, on 15 September, of Security Council resolution 1264 (1999). It paves the way for the restoration of peace and should enable the democratic process to be successfully concluded. France is participating in the international force established by decision of the Security Council.

Our Organization therefore remains true to the values we celebrated last year, on its fiftieth anniversary. But much effort is still needed for these values to be respected everywhere. To achieve this, it is essential to strengthen international criminal law. France actively supports the work of the international criminal tribunals of The Hague and Arusha. The establishment of the International Criminal Court will be a new and decisive step in the progress of law. France hopes that it will be set up quickly; to that end, it has already amended its own Constitution.

To carry out its mission, the United Nations needs assured means. In order to deal with financial difficulties and prevent these from becoming a pretext for inaction, all Member States must meet their financial obligations vis-à-vis the Organization. France does so completely and unreservedly. A responsible attitude on the part of contributing States would advance the necessary reform of the Organization, including that of its Security Council.

I should like to share with the Assembly my second firm conviction: that the United Nations is admirably suited to meeting the challenges of our new world. Indeed, its mission is strengthened by globalization.

Initially, the idea of organizing relations between States at the world level may have seemed utopian to some. It was merely before its time. Indeed, I consider the United Nations to be modern for the following reasons. Our global and unstable world needs organization and the goal of the United Nations has always been to seek a better organization of the world. The United Nations is in step with a networked world. It is itself a network, a rich and unique panoply of specialized but independent and coordinated agencies. In half a century, the United Nations has made a tool for action which can be adapted to our world. The United Nations has not aged; it has grown with the world. It must allow us to face the new challenges emerging in today's world.

A contradictory state of affairs has replaced the euphoric illusion which followed the end of the confrontation between blocs 10 years ago. Globalization is not monolithic. While it is unifying, it also divides. While it generates remarkable progress, it also leads to unacceptable inequalities. While it opens societies to one another, it carries with it the threat of creating uniformity. While it frees up energy, it also releases negative forces that must be brought under control. The movement of populations and the clash of cultures are therefore accompanied by rising fears as to identity, by religious intolerance and by xenophobia. France, which has a presence on five continents and is itself a land of immigration, has had experience of such confrontations in its history. It knows the risks they entail and the wealth they bring. We will give our full support to the world conference on racism, to be held in 2001. Preventing the emergence of prejudice, which too often has deadly consequences, will prepare the way for peace for future generations.

The fruits of globalization are not shared equally. The opening of economies, the increase in trade and the acceleration of technological progress all fuel growth. But inequalities are growing between countries and within each economy. Nearly one in four human beings lives in great poverty. We cannot leave matters as they stand. The rapid expansion of communications networks does not benefit everyone. Yet the multiplication of sources of information, the increased circulation of ideas and the profusion of new inventions are full of promise. Lower communications costs made possible by the Internet can be an asset for businesses in countries in the South. But inequalities in education hinder access to these technologies. These impressive instruments for furthering knowledge may become formidable factors in inequality. Communication is also a right. It is essential that this right not be threatened by the concentration in just a few hands of sources of information and the means of production and distribution. France will staunchly defend cultural diversity.

Globalization must encourage all of us to take account of the fragility of our world — our Earth and our commonweal. Our environment is not a product, a simple stock of raw materials on which we can draw without giving thought to future generations. True development is sustainable development. Since the Rio Summit in 1992 this realization has been behind the adoption of important commitments with regard to the climate, biodiversity and desertification. The Kyoto Protocol on climate change and the current negotiations on a protocol on biosafety

attest to the importance of the achievements. But the uncertain future of climates and the recurrence of natural catastrophes urge us to make further efforts.

The Earth is fragile, but so, too, is the human species. The spread of new epidemics endangers the health of entire populations. Inequalities in development exacerbate those scourges. Some 40 million people live with the AIDS virus today, the majority of them in developing countries. The spread of the pandemic in Africa is a matter of major concern for us. I shall come back to that issue.

Globalization is changing the nature of organized crime, an area in which there has been a real explosion. The much greater fluidity in movement allows criminal networks to exploit the inconsistencies between one national law and another and the weaknesses of some of them so as to hide from justice. My country is ready to make every effort to combat this scourge. The President of the French Republic made that clear last year at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to that issue. The United Nations has long been engaged in the fight against international drug-trafficking, building up expertise, establishing specialized services and drafting a body of doctrine and a legal framework. These must be strengthened. But, above all, States must be more committed to action. In January negotiations began in Vienna on a convention against transnational organized crime. We must bring this to a satisfactory conclusion in the year 2000.

Faced with globalization, we have a choice to make. We can either go along with the supposedly universal economic laws, and in so doing abdicate our political responsibilities, or we can seek to impose order on globalization and thereby achieve control of our collective future. For my part, I believe that global problems call for global responses and that an unstable world needs to be regulated, requiring what our Anglo-Saxon friends might call "rules and regulations". This world needs rules. It needs the United Nations.

This choice is also a matter of sovereignty. As the Secretary-General pointed out on 8 December last year in Paris, the first words of our Charter, "We the Peoples of the United Nations", make it an expression of popular sovereignty. But in order for the sovereignty of peoples to be affirmed they must find the means to acquire the mechanisms, the means of control and the benefits of globalization. That is my third conviction. The more the world becomes globalized, the more it needs rules. Faced with the temptation of unilateralism, it is more necessary than ever to base our action on multilateral rules respected by all. First of all, these concern the economy. We must define the rules of the game so that everyone can benefit from globalization. We must define the rules of the game between the industrial and developing countries and between the major economic actors, small and medium-sized business and the citizens of our countries who work and produce.

In the financial sphere, we have to strengthen the stability of the monetary and financial system by ensuring the political legitimacy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), involving the developing countries more closely in the adoption of common rules and making private financial operators liable for the consequences of their decisions for countries in crisis. Real progress has been made since the crises of 1997 and 1998. France contributed to this by its proposals, especially in regard to hedge funds and fiscal havens. It will continue to work to this end, as much remains to be done.

These rules of the game have to be based on better coordination among international institutions. Since 1945, international cooperation has respected the principle of specialization of institutions. In the future, the task is to make them more complementary. Economic and trade rules cannot disregard the most elementary social and environmental norms. Accordingly, France supported the adoption by the International Labour Conference a year ago of a declaration on the fundamental principles and rights involved in labour. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is an irreplaceable forum for dialogue between government and social partners and for the formulation of minimal standards. It is desirable that it establish close relations with other organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank.

For these rules of the game to be better respected, appropriate cooperation has to be established with the poorest countries. Their debt burden continues to be the primary obstacle to development. At their meeting in Cologne, the G-7 countries pledged to grant further debt relief. France contributed to this. Three principles will be applied: solidarity, which calls for us to grant the poorest countries the most favourable debt treatment; fairness, which requires the rich countries to share the financial effort in a balanced way; and responsibility, whereby the countries benefiting from this aid undertake policies directed towards sustainable development and the fight against poverty. For these countries, official development

assistance remains indispensable. France will continue to advocate greater effort on the part of the richest countries.

Our action should be increasingly inspired by the affirmation of common values and rules. Human rights are central to this approach. I am referring in particular to the weakest children. The ILO Convention which outlaws the worst forms of child labour is a new case in point. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child must be supplemented as soon as possible by the two protocols now being negotiated, one against the recruitment of children in armed conflicts, the other against the sale of children and child prostitution and pornography.

To affirm the rights of women is to recognize their decisive role in education, in the production of wealth and in development. But it is also to combat the discrimination and violence which they suffer. France has made equality between women and men one of the cornerstones in the renewal of its public life. The additional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination against Women, submitted to the General Assembly for approval, offers women the possibility to assert their rights in an individual capacity. That is a major step forward. The special session of the General Assembly in June 2000 will highlight the progress that has been achieved since the 1995 Conference in Beijing.

Reaffirming the right of all human beings to health means combating pandemics everywhere. In December 1997, in Abidjan, France proposed the establishment of a "therapeutic solidarity fund" to mobilize the international community to care for and treat AIDS sufferers. The countries of the South and associations involved in combating the disease welcomed the proposal warmly. But the impact of AIDS on development remains dramatic. We must intensify our efforts to reduce this plague. Only the United Nations can give these efforts the necessary breadth.

The principle of precaution has to be the basis for our action regarding the environment and health safety. The Montreal Protocol for the protection of the ozone layer, based on the principle of differentiated commitments between the North and South, is an example of well-conceived international action. These efforts must be continued. We will do so by advocating, with our European Union partners, a world convention on forests and by redoubling efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere. Precaution must also be the guiding principle in monitoring food safety. The combination of concern for sustainable agriculture, the quality of products and the preservation of food traditions in each country explain the intensity of recent reactions. France therefore intends to see these demands taken into account at the forthcoming WTO negotiations.

In order to address and overcome the world's problems, to derive the best from globalization, we need nations to be aware of their responsibilities, and we need also to have "more" of the United Nations. Through an Organization strengthened by a renewed sense of mission, supported by sovereign States and regional organizations, we will be able to further respect for human rights, promote democracy, work for sustainable development and help all to achieve their potential.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of France for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister of France, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. El-Khatib (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I am fully confident that your experience and skills will bring the work of this session to a successful conclusion. Please permit me also to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his magnificent and distinguished stewardship, which made a success of the last session.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his wise leadership and outstanding work towards realizing and emphasizing the goals and principles of the United Nations and his tireless efforts to achieve peace, security and stability in the world.

In the last few months of the second millennium, and as we bid farewell to it and await the dawning of the third millennium, this session of the General Assembly takes place at an important historic and symbolic moment, a moment of mixed emotions. We look back and see that mankind has achieved great things despite the serious suffering and pain that have marked the twentieth century. We look forward with great hope to entering a new era in which we shall build a more humanitarian world, in which nations will be able to live in true partnership, with a sense of belonging to this planet, in a more just and harmonious way. We shall have an enhanced ability to cope collectively with the

major challenges that confront us and to respond to changes that require a long-range global vision. This will increase our ability to provide answers and solutions to the difficult questions and issues that face us.

This historic moment is of particular importance in the life of Jordan, which was engulfed by grief a few months ago, when it was deprived of its great leader, the late King Hussein Ibn Talal — may God bless his soul. He had succeeded in turning Jordan from a small country with limited resources into an oasis of peace and stability in a region beset by disturbances and wars. This country has just begun a new era under the leadership of King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein. His Majesty has assumed the responsibility for continuing, with renewed vigour, to lead Jordan to progress and prosperity, as we look forward to ushering in the new century. He is committed also to Jordan's continuing to make its important and essential contribution to the building of peace in the Middle East and to continuing to contribute generously at the international level. He strongly believes, as Jordan's leaders have always believed, that our country belongs to this international family. Jordan is committed to the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of international law.

Our late leader was a unique international leader, with an unflinching belief in the role of the United Nations and in the peaceful settlement of disputes. He expressed his belief in these principles by working all his life to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on international legitimacy. He did this out of his strong belief in human dignity, in people's right to live free from all forms of injustice and despotism, and out of an awareness that human life is too precious to be wasted in confrontations and wars. Human beings have the right to lead free and dignified lives, channelling all their resources and energies towards achieving economic and social development and participating in building a prosperous and secure future for the generations to come.

The life of our great leader who is, alas, no more, is the story of the building of modern Jordan. His exceptional contributions in the international arena were also a rare example of what can be achieved by a historic leader who believes in high moral principles and supreme virtues. Jordanians felt a deep sense of pride and appreciation when they saw the whole world — leaders and common people alike — standing side by side with them, sharing their grief at the loss of the creator of their renaissance and their modern State. They also felt a deep sense of trust and confidence in the strength and durability of their constitutional and institutional structures, which were built by the late leader of their country and have ensured a stable and successful beginning to the era of King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, in a way that has won the appreciation and respect of the world.

Jordanians are rallying today behind their King and marching behind him on the road to realizing their hopes and aspirations. Jordan is beginning, under the leadership of King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, a new era with a firm commitment to following the same course that has distinguished and will continue to distinguish Jordanian policy at both the domestic and international levels.

Over the past few months, Jordan has continued its efforts to advance the peace process in the Middle East. This process had suffered over the past three years from foot-dragging leading to effective deadlock, all of which severely tested the confidence of the peoples of the region in the peace process as a whole. The result of last May's parliamentary elections in Israel gave rise to new hopes of reviving this process and putting it back on track. The positive developments of the past few weeks show that the region stands now before a second historic opportunity to achieve peace on all tracks. We sincerely hope that the leaders of the region will seize this opportunity, live up to the expectations and aspirations of their peoples and not hesitate to take the bold decisions needed to bring the negotiations to fruition.

The question of Palestine has been and will continue to be at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Middle East crisis. The establishment of peace in the region therefore requires, first and foremost, that a just solution should be reached to this question — a solution with which the peoples of the region will be satisfied and which they will if need be defend. Jordan has been calling throughout the past year for the Wye River Memorandum, which was arrived at with the unprecedented involvement and assistance of the late King Hussein, to be implemented. We have been consistently aware of the impact that implementation of the Memorandum would have on reactivating the peace process on all tracks, on establishing confidence and a spirit of partnership between the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships, and on re-establishing confidence in the peace process amongst the peoples of the region. The signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum has enhanced the prospects for implementing the Wye River Memorandum in a way that we hope will advance the final status negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis so that a settlement may be reached that would

ensure that the Palestinian people realize their right to self-determination, including their right to establish an independent State on their national territory, with Al-Quds al-Sharif — Holy Jerusalem — as its capital.

As King Abdullah II has emphasized, Jordan will continue to provide support for a successful conclusion of the negotiations. We are directly interested in their success because the issues on the agenda relate to our national interest, particularly the issues of the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Over the past 50 years, Jordan, more than any other party, has shouldered the burden of the refugee problem. This has put immense pressures on Jordan's resources and economy, particularly given that every reduction in the services provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has placed additional burdens on Jordan. Direct expenditures by the Government of Jordan on services provided to the refugees in 1998 reached 4.75 times the amount spent by UNRWA on such services. Total expenditures incurred by the Government of Jordan equal the entire budget that UNRWA spends on refugees in all its areas of operations throughout the Middle East. Jordan calls on the international community not to allow any reductions in the role of UNRWA or in its programmes until the refugee question has been resolved in accordance with international legitimacy — which would lead to the closing of this file in its entirety once and for all. Jordan also calls on the donor countries to continue their support for UNRWA to enable it to continue to discharge its responsibilities.

With regard to the peace process on other tracks, Jordan believes that a comprehensive solution is a prerequisite for the establishment of peace in the region. Without such a solution, no settlement can be assured of durability. Jordan therefore strongly supports the efforts to reactivate negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. It supports the demand by Syria and Lebanon that negotiations should be resumed from the point at which they stopped. The Jordanian leadership will spare no effort to help bring about a breakthrough in negotiations on both tracks.

Hopes have been rising over the past few weeks that this can be achieved, particularly in view of Syria's reaffirmation of its full commitment to work for the establishment of peace and of its concern for reviving the peace process and bringing it to its desired goal: the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement. There have also been a number of positive indicators from the Syrian Government and the Israeli Government has said that it is convinced of the crucial importance of reaching a peace agreement with Syria. While looking forward to these positive developments with great hopes, the peoples of the region earnestly desire that this historic opportunity should not be missed and that the efforts made will succeed in reaching a settlement whereby Syria and Lebanon will have their legitimate rights restored through Israel's withdrawal from the Syrian Arab Golan Heights and from southern Lebanon in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

The peoples of the Middle East region have suffered unprecedented hardships because of the failure to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peaceful settlement. Vast resources have been squandered on a useless arms race that failed to provide security for any of the parties. Today the peoples of the region look forward to real progress in the peace process — progress that will help create a climate conducive to an end to the arms race and to convincing the various parties that peace is the only option capable of providing security for all. It will also convince them to make the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. This requires a commitment from all parties to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The issues of refugees, economic disparities and water, as well as the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, require effective regional cooperation and concrete international support. Without resolving the fundamental political aspects of the conflict, the region will continue to suffer from the consequences of non-cooperation in resolving these issues. Unless they are resolved, they themselves will escalate and create new hotbeds of conflict in the region.

On the eastern flank of our region, the Iraqi people continue to suffer unprecedented hardships as a result of the continued economic sanctions. The price of these sanctions is paid by the Iraqi people in terms of their health, nutrition, education and prospects for progress. This poses serious future dangers for the region as a whole.

Jordan therefore calls for ending this suffering by lifting the sanctions. It also calls for the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including those concerning the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons. It further calls upon the Security Council to conduct a comprehensive review that would

lead to extricating Iraq from this situation and to affirm its position of upholding the territorial integrity of Iraq as one of the main pillars of regional security.

Jordan's geographical location between two extremely complex situations resulting from the consequences of the Middle East crisis in general and the lack of progress in the peace process during the past three years in particular, as well as the continued economic sanctions against Iraq for nine years, has subjected the Jordanian economy to tremendous pressures. Countries with capabilities and resources much greater than Jordan's would have difficulty coping with them. Although Jordan is committed to implementing an integrated programme of reform and restructuring of its economy and to taking difficult and painful economic measures, the impact of these two situations makes it virtually impossible for Jordan to achieve acceptable levels of economic growth, and it continues to suffer a huge external debt.

Viewing the real economic situation of Jordan and the challenges facing it without linking it to the regional environment that affects it does not give a true picture of this situation. While Jordan is grateful for and appreciative of the international community's support for Jordan's efforts to cope with its enormous economic challenges, and its assistance to Jordan in playing its central role in maintaining stability in the region, Jordan would like the international community to have a better understanding of its economic problems. From this perspective, we view with special appreciation the final communiqué issued at the Summit meeting of the leaders of the industrialized nations in Cologne last June, which reflected political will to help Jordan and called for the consideration of reducing Jordan's foreign debt-burden. We hope that the friendly creditor countries will take all possible measures to translate that political will into action, enabling Jordan to reduce its debt burden to a point that allows its economy to be revitalized and to achieve higher growth rates.

The tragic situation the people of Kosovo were made to experience severely tested the ability of the international community, at the close of this century, to prevent the crimes of ethnic cleansing and the violation of basic human rights from being committed in a most despicable, racist manner. This matter raises extremely serious and complex questions about the role of the United Nations and the limits that separate the right of States to assert their sovereignty without committing mass crimes against helpless unarmed civilians.

There are lessons to be drawn from this bitter human experience. On the one hand, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's ability to put an end to the criminal acts has given clear evidence to all those who harbour thoughts of rebelling against international law and of committing similar acts that they should not presume that their domestic military strength ensures absolute dominance, including violation of human rights. Upholding the principle of sovereignty should not overturn the obligation to observe human rights and international humanitarian law.

On the other hand, as Members of this international Organization, we must look into finding mechanisms that ensure the enhancement of the United Nations and its ability to be the framework that expresses the determination of the international community to prevent such crimes, and to be the umbrella for the coordination and organization of collective international action to achieve that goal.

That situation has demonstrated the need for formulating a new international order for the twenty-first century, in which all peoples can enjoy respect for their diversity and can participate in the formation of a world conscience that ensures their coexistence. Continued progress by peoples in adopting democracy as a way of life makes it urgent to strengthen democracy within the international system. Since the United Nations is the backbone of the world system, it must evolve in such a way that reflects the new realities in the international arena.

Our international community has an urgent need to pause for a real review of the international situation in all its dimensions: political, security, economic, environmental and human rights. We hope that the world summit to be held next year will provide an opportunity for such a review.

While we see that many issues and crises considered by the United Nations remain to be resolved, this does not necessarily mean failure on the part of the United Nations as much as it demonstrates the importance of an existing political will to resolve them.

Furthermore, the challenges of globalization pose new kinds of global problems, which require harmonious global solutions to the challenges facing developed societies, such as terrorism, drug-trafficking and pollution of the environment, and to the challenges that threaten the developing countries, such as debt, unemployment

and economic recession. Such solutions must also strengthen the ability of the developing countries to benefit from the opportunities provided by globalization and to avoid its negative effects by preventing a broadening of the inequalities that lie between them and the developed countries. The persistence of these inequalities will cause the developing countries to remain on the periphery of globalization.

Despite the magnitude of the challenges that continue to confront us as we begin the proceedings of this last session of the General Assembly in this century, we should not overlook the many positive steps that have been made recently. The adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court was a particularly important measure taken towards confronting and preventing the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity from escaping punishment. I must also mention the successful conclusion of the first Conference of States Parties on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and On Their Destruction.

Such accomplishments contribute to strengthening human security and consolidating the commitment to human rights. They also provide examples of the potential for activating international cooperation in many areas, including the promotion of international commitment to condemning and prohibiting terrorism.

In a different context, Jordan welcomes the agreement reached by Libya and the United Nations on the Lockerbie issue. It also commends the strenuous efforts made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which contributed to the reaching of an agreement. It calls for the complete lifting of sanctions against Libya, after the removal of the reasons for such sanctions and following the extradition of the two suspects for trial.

On the matter of regional crises, we appeal to our friends in Pakistan and India to resort to peaceful means to resolve their conflict and to refrain from any escalation that would seriously endanger the peace of the Indian subcontinent and the whole world.

As for the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan calls for, as it always has, the resolution of this dispute through dialogue based upon mutual respect. It also hopes that Iran will heed the United Arab Emirates' request to enter into dialogue with a specific timetable and agenda, in order to reach a solution that conforms to international legitimacy, which denies the admissibility of occupation of territory by force.

Jordan attaches special importance to maintaining a dialogue between religions and civilizations, in order to bring closer together the views of the various beliefs, religions and civilizations. This will also create a common base for developing humanitarian thought, which calls for peace and cooperation rather than confrontation. These efforts have resulted in creating a greater awareness at the domestic and international levels of the goals of this dialogue. We hope that the United Nations will promote, through its specialized agencies, programmes of dialogue in the various fields of human activity and at all national, regional and international levels.

The international community is called upon to use dialogue to combat dangerous discriminatory practices, which we see today, such as Islamophobia. Islam is being subjected to a severe and unjustified attack, which attempts, intentionally or unintentionally, to establish a linkage between Islam and those extremist and terrorist movements that hurt Islam and Muslims by using religion as a tool. Discrimination and arbitrary practices against Muslim populations in various countries are only a result of extremist thinking, far removed from the principles of civilized behaviour and humanity. The international community must consider how to confront this phenomenon of Islamophobia in order to prevent its proliferation.

Natural disasters, which have afflicted many countries recently, remind us of a basic fact, which is that we all face phenomena and challenges that do not discriminate between us on the basis of race, religion, wealth or geographical location. While expressing sympathy to our friends in Turkey and Greece, which have been hit by earthquakes recently, and our admiration for the positive sentiments they have expressed to each other in their suffering, we realize that confronting natural dangers and disasters, like confronting other challenges, requires a sincere political will to take collective action in order to preserve the planet, to which we all belong equally.

Agenda item 8

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Letters from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/54/313/Add.1 and 2)

The President: I should like to draw attention to the two letters dated 15 September 1999 from the Chairman

of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly, contained in document A/54/313/Add.1 and 2. As members are aware, the Assembly, in paragraph 7 of resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the General Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in document A/54/313/Add.1, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives to meet in New York during the main part of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts this recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

The President: As indicated in document A/54/313/Add.2, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Committee on Information to meet in New York during the main part of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts this recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

Announcement

The President: As members can see, this meeting has gone quite a bit past 1 p.m. in order to accommodate all the speakers on the list for this meeting. In this connection, I should like to again remind members that the General Assembly, in paragraph 21 of the annex to resolution 51/241, indicated a voluntary guideline of up to 20 minutes for each statement in the general debate.

I would appeal to speakers in future meetings to make an effort to observe this voluntary 20-minute guideline for the general debate.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.5

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

5th plenary meeting
Monday, 20 September 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Address by Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mkapa: Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. This is an expression of delegations' confidence in and high esteem for your diplomatic skills, and reflects also the distinguished role which your country has played in furthering the goals of this Assembly. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Tanzanian delegation as you guide the deliberations during this session.

I wish also to commend your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for ably presiding over the Assembly at its fifty-third session. I congratulate very specially the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the able and distinguished manner in which he has continued to manage and guide the affairs of our Organization in the face of many daunting challenges.

This last General Assembly session of the century and millennium, provides an opportunity to review the past and draw lessons from it. We must build on the positive, even as we mobilize the individual and collective will to avoid carrying the baggage of poverty, conflict and human rights violations into the next century. The role of the United Nations system must also be re-examined in accordance with the new vision we have for the future.

The twentieth century witnessed tremendous advances in science and technology. But the benefits were not shared widely, let alone equally. Unprecedented economic development and prosperity has been attained, with world consumption topping $24 trillion in 1998, twice the level of 1975 and six times that of 1950. But, on a world scale, the 20 per cent of the world's people in the highest income countries consumed 86 per cent of the world's goods and services, producing a corresponding degree of pollution and environmental damage. And a whole fifth of humanity has been left completely out of this prosperity.

This century has also experienced major international conflicts, particularly the two world wars. The existence of a bipolar system driven by ideological differences, and the resultant arms race that led to the

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abuse of science which was the development of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, exacerbated the security situation in the world. To its credit, the United Nations Organization has laid the foundation and framework for the attainment of peace, security, development and human rights. The United Nations actively supported liberation struggles all over the world, and we are entering the new millennium having accomplished the mission of political decolonization in most countries. Of particular gratification to Africa is the end of apartheid.

We have also witnessed the end of the cold war, even though the peace dividend has yet to reach all corners of the globe and include the innocent victims of the cold war. For, as the African proverb has it, when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.

Africa has unfortunately been left behind in development. Despite the positive macroeconomic achievements in recent years, the average African household today consumes 20 per cent less than it did 25 years ago. Other new, critical challenges facing Africa include conflicts and the urgent need to consolidate the rule of law, human rights and democratic governance.

The United Nations in the coming century will be measured, among other things, by the degree to which these issues, particularly the development dimension, are addressed. The United Nations, by virtue of its global reach, its universal membership and its impartiality, has a vital role to play to ensure there is equity between the response to the challenges facing Africa and those facing other parts of the world.

The United Nations should also continue its role of coordinating the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and regional economic commissions. We reiterate the need for broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in international decision-making. Democracy and good governance between nations is as important to humanity as democracy and good governance within nations.

Processes of liberalization and globalization of the world economy have profound implications for Africa and other least developed countries in terms of their position in the world economy, their development prospects, the nature of their economic policies and their impact on economic sovereignty.

The community of nations, at the dawn of a new millennium, should rethink the mechanisms and policies that underpin the functioning of the global economy to create a conducive international environment that ensures the rapid economic development of the least developed countries. We need a system whose pillars are growth, stability and social equity, and which should facilitate the integration of least developed countries into the world economy in a beneficial way.

These countries, particularly those in Africa, remain constrained by weak supply capabilities, which, when compounded by an unfavourable international economic environment, limit their ability to benefit from globalization. The trend of the last few years does not give us much comfort. From 1990 to 1996, African exports of goods grew by only 2 per cent on average.

The long-term objective of our development efforts is to improve production of quality goods and services that can meet local needs and be exported. We see trade as a dynamic force for accelerating growth and development. We are, however, aware of our limitations in producing such products for the international market. Our economies still largely rely on the production of commodities, in respect of which terms of trade continue to worsen. The issue of commodities should thus continue to be central to the international development agenda. In particular, we urge the international community to provide resources and technical assistance to countries that depend on commodities to build the capacity for vertical and horizontal diversification of commodities.

Furthermore, developed countries and funding institutions should increase their support to the Common Fund for Commodities, including fulfilment of their pledges. The United Nations should also reconsider the proposal for the establishment of a special fund to promote commodity diversification in Africa.

We hope that the Seattle ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will give further impetus to the implementation of measures to assist least developed countries to become integrated into the international trading system in a meaningful way. We call upon the donor community to extend financial and technical assistance towards the implementation of integration frameworks prepared by the least developed countries.

The burden of debt is one of the main obstacles to the achievement of the economic and social development

objectives of African and other least developed countries. These countries devote a high proportion, in some cases exceeding 30 per cent, of government revenue to debt service payment, with the consequent risk of social and political instability. We welcome the various debt relief initiatives undertaken by the donor community. They provide some relief, but more far-reaching measures, including debt forgiveness, need to be taken urgently to have an impact on poverty.

Tanzania welcomes the revisions made to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative at the Cologne summit of the Group of Seven. However, if growth is to be sustained, adequate levels of external funding must complement our economic reform efforts. Nor should debt relief under the HIPC Initiative be a substitute for increased bilateral non-debt-creating aid, and neither should it be financed through reallocation of committed aid.

Tanzania has established a multilateral-debt-relief fund to help it service multilateral debt so as to direct the savings to poverty-reducing activities in the social sector, such as education, health and water services. We have shown that it is possible to link debt relief directly to poverty eradication initiatives in a transparent and accountable manner that involves government, civil society and donor countries. The debt relief we have received through the fund has gone straight to cushioning the social sector budget. I want to thank the Governments of Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, which have contributed to our war on poverty by contributing to our multilateral-debt-relief fund account.

My delegation is deeply disturbed by the drastic decline in official development assistance to less than one third of the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of donor countries. For five years continuously, from 1992 to 1997, aid as a percentage of gross national product in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) fell, from a combined average of 0.33 per cent to an all-time low of 0.22 per cent. This trend needs to be reversed as a matter of urgency.

But what is needed is aid that increasingly enhances our capacity for ownership of the development agenda and process, and our capacity to be self-developing. We do not want the kind of aid that takes from us the initiative for development in dignity, and increases rather than reduces dependency on aid. Among other things, we need aid that will help us develop an attractive environment for private-sector investment, domestic and foreign.

Technology is a key factor in the development process. The recent great strides in technology present tremendous opportunities for human development. However, this technological revolution has largely bypassed African and other least developed countries. The United Nations, and the international community at large, should facilitate and finance access to and transfer of technology, including new and environmentally sound technologies, for developing countries on favourable, including consessional, or grant terms.

Tanzania is working closely with other countries to find a peaceful resolution to conflicts in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Burundi and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Burundi peace process, under the facilitation of Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, is going well in Arusha. The main sticking point is security arrangements that would instil confidence and trust for all, as well as a democratic process involving all stakeholders. We hope that these problems will be resolved in the coming rounds of talks, so that a peace agreement can be reached as soon as possible. The international community should therefore continue urging full participation by all the key players in the Arusha peace process. All attempts to wreck the negotiations, under any pretext, should be discouraged.

Concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is very encouraging that all the parties involved in the conflict have finally signed the Lusaka ceasefire Agreement. The challenge ahead is to not let the momentum ebb, but to move expeditiously to implement the truce, including sending and empowering Organization of African Unity (OAU) observers and a United Nations peacekeeping force, as envisaged.

Angola continues to experience a fratricidal war waged by rebel UNITA forces against the legal Government of Angola. Clearly, Jonas Savimbi has violated the Lusaka Peace Agreement and has shown contempt for international opinion. It is counterproductive for the United Nations to remove its observer team from Angola, as this would send a negative signal that the international community is abandoning Angola in its hour of need.

The most recent summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held in Maputo, expressed solidarity with the Government of President

Dos Santos and pledged to give him moral and material support. The international community should likewise be forthright in its support for the Angolan Government and in condemning Jonas Savimbi as the war criminal that he is. Action commensurate with the gravity of his insolence and his human rights abuses should likewise be taken against him.

On Western Sahara, Tanzania is following closely the peace process under the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). We hope that a solution to the crisis will be found through a referendum as provided for in the United-Nations-brokered peace process without any further unnecessary delays.

My delegation commends the truces and negotiated settlements reached in the conflicts in Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia, even as we urge practical commitment to peace and reconciliation in the Ethiopia-Eritrea war.

I wish also to commend and encourage the positive developments unfolding in Middle East. I urge Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak to remain committed to the peace process and to move with courage and vision to the next stages that will ensure the durable and shared peace and security that has eluded the Palestinian and Israeli people for so long.

From this podium, I denounce the merchants of war fuelling conflicts on the African continent. Arms dealers should stop supplying weapons to conflict areas. Countries should adhere to the relevant international conventions prohibiting the arms trade, especially between non-state entities. It is immoral and unacceptable that natural resources such as gold, diamonds, oil and timber, which should be exploited to build a better future for African children, are being used instead to buy weapons from rich countries and arms dealers, with which to kill and maim those very children and their parents.

Associated with conflicts in the Great Lakes region is the problem of refugees. Tanzania has received refugees for over 40 years now. As I speak, we still host over 800,000 refugees, some in refugee camps and many others in settlement camps and elsewhere in society. We have always received refugees out of humanitarian concerns in the African way and in fulfilment of our international obligations. We have never turned away those fleeing to save their lives, and we have never negotiated refugee quotas with other countries. Yet even for us, the time comes when we must appeal for more help to give us the capacity to provide succour and refuge to these people. I pay tribute to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata, and her colleagues for the efforts they are making to draw international attention to African refugees and displaced persons.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has done much, but it can only do as much as the international community gives it resources to do. I urge greater support to UNHCR and other relief agencies working in Tanzania, and greater support to my Government.

A lasting solution to the refugee problem, however, lies in resolving the root causes in the refugee-generating countries. This would enable UNHCR to begin the repatriation process, as was done successfully in the case of Rwanda three years ago.

Four years ago, the United Nations established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha. Apart from the Tribunal's early teething problems, the Government of Tanzania lauds its many precedent-setting achievements in the emerging area of international criminal justice. We commend the improvements in the efficiency of the Tribunal's operations and management under its Registrar.

As we pledge to continue fully supporting the Tribunal in accordance with our obligations as the host country, we call upon the United Nations and the entire international community to continue providing all necessary support, including resources and manpower, until the task of prosecuting all culprits in the Rwanda genocide episode is successfully accomplished. A strong and clear message must come out of this Assembly that no war criminal will ever escape the long arm of international law.

Tanzania adds its voice to the denunciation of the violent attempts to thwart the fulfilment of the desire of the people of East Timor to be free and sovereign, clearly and preponderantly expressed in a free and fair referendum. The results of the referendum must be respected and the Timorese people's aspirations realized. The international community must assume its responsibility to see this process to a successful conclusion. No effort and no sacrifice is too big to be made in that regard. We commend and encourage the decision of the Government of Indonesia to invite and cooperate with international efforts under the United Nations to stop the massacres and mayhem and to ensure

that the wishes of the majority of the people of East Timor are unequivocally met.

We in Tanzania believe that no national or global efforts to eradicate poverty can succeed unless and until they address the specific problems related to the poverty of women. We urge the United Nations to continue promoting gender equality issues, including the provision of resources and technical assistance to enhance women's education, health and other projects aimed at their empowerment.

My Government is striving to make sure that women are given opportunity to fully participate in all levels of decision-making and that they get equal access to education and access to credits on a preferential basis. We have also taken measures to protect women, girls and children from sexual harassment and abuse. Tanzania has most stringent legislation on sexual offences that provides for punishment up to life imprisonment. There is also a new Land Law providing for complete gender equality in the ownership, use and disposal of land and which supersedes customary land law. There are also laws to protect the rights of women in marriage, child custody and inheritance, which are being reviewed to address all the concerns of women. Special efforts are also being made to increase the enrolment of girls and women at all levels of education.

These are challenging times, especially for developing countries. Yet, I believe there is a ray hope for building the foundations of a more equitable and dynamic system of international development cooperation through the smart partnership approach of a "win-win" outcome for all players. As we enter the new millennium, I wish to reiterate our firm commitment to cooperating with others in achieving the goals of the United Nations Charter, particularly those relating to the promotion of economic development and prosperity, peace and security and a better world for present and future generations.

As we enter the century of globalization, let all Governments ask the question: Are we globalizing prosperity or are we globalizing poverty? Are we striving for the kind of political correctness that eschews affluence amid poverty or for that which manufactures euphemisms for poverty, pretending it will go away? In a vivid cartoon in 1965, Jules Feiffer portrayed the plight of the poor in these words:

> "I used to think I was poor. Then they told me I wasn't poor; I was needy. Then they told me it was self-defeating to think of myself as needy; I was deprived. Then they told me that underprivileged was overused; I was disadvantaged. I still don't have a dime. But I have a great vocabulary."

That plight of the poor persists equally poignantly to this day. We have spoken much; perhaps too much. The archives of this Organization are bursting with studies and ideas and reviews. Let us strive to do more and talk less in the new century.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lacayo (*spoke in Spanish*): Please accept our warmest congratulations, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We wish you every success, which we are convinced will be forthcoming in your leadership and in the outcome of these proceedings.

We also wish to convey heartfelt recognition to the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, who so brilliantly presided over the last session, a matter of legitimate pride for Latin America.

I should also like to convey a message of warm support and tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the fruitful work that he has been pursuing with commendable energy and great vision, to reform, strengthen and invigorate the complex and sensitive United Nations system within a comprehensive context while looking towards a new century and a new

millennium that will require all kinds of revisions, adjustments and adaptations.

We share and support the initiatives that, among their other objectives, are designed to make it easier for countries that are relatively underdeveloped and engaged in the tasks of economic and social development and combating poverty to achieve the very difficult and painful transition to a new globalized world with a market economy devoid of barriers, where rapidly developing patterns are being imposed with regard to competitiveness, advanced technology, models of culture and consumption, social and computer communications, sophisticated systems of financing and a vast array of other tools and processes. All of this highlights with stark reality the great differences and imbalances that exist at the international level.

Those are the major challenges that we must confront together, using political will, hard work, education, training, the transfer of science and technology, investment, openness, production, trade, superior skills and active policies of participation to ensure that shared benefits will flow out to profit all, fairly and equitably, at every layer of the social fabric of our peoples.

It would be unfortunate and very dangerous if these great opportunities offered by globalization were not translated into positive, innovative and tangible changes to effectively promote, in the shortest time possible, a substantive improvement in standards of living, expectations and opportunities for the vast majority, within the framework of sustainable development.

On occasions, at certain stages in these transitional processes, disturbances have occurred as a result of troubling inequalities between various sectors and social actors. Such differences exist and are growing both in advanced countries and in developing countries, which are in the majority.

We should anticipate, reverse, mitigate or, at least, temper with realism and sensitivity such negative effects, which owe their origins and characteristics to specific circumstances and considerations that were assumed to be temporary. A failure to take adequate measures could put at risk budding democracies, which are precariously building stability and the institutional structures of law and governance.

In this primordial task, the participation of citizens and of civil society, in its various forms, is vital. We must make use of a constant, open and pluralist dialogue to facilitate changes of course, reform and consensus, which will contribute to the strengthening of democratic systems and make it possible for people to live together in peace.

In this context, this year the two main political forces in Nicaragua, which together won a little more than 90 per cent of the vote in the most recent elections, have produced an agenda that will be submitted to the National Assembly for consideration, so that it can be debated with complete transparency in the nation's principal forum.

Furthermore, beginning in 1997, my country began a difficult reorganization and structural adjustment process, taking the decision to deal responsibly with the high political and social costs of laying down the stable foundations for dynamic national reconstruction and transformation.

We must put behind us once and for all the painful period in our history, which lasted more than a decade and was characterized by destruction and violence in a cycle of fratricidal confrontation and which, fortunately, has now been overcome. That historical interval left us in a very weakened state that was reflected in the deterioration of all human development indicators, the general collapse of economic activities and a gigantic external debt whose unbearable and overwhelming weight was borne on the impoverished shoulders of the long-suffering people of Nicaragua.

This situation of extreme fragility made it necessary, from the beginning of my Government, to formulate an economic policy that would gain the support and credibility of the international community and the multilateral organizations. This led to an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) programme which, after its projected completion within a period of three years, would have made it possible for us to qualify for the concessionary plan of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative.

While we were occupied with the many sacrifices that we had to make during that tough process of healing, reorganization and reconstruction, a little less than a year ago we suffered the ill-timed and devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch, which severely affected our efforts, work and plans. However, generous international cooperation mitigated to some extent the suffering, the irreparable loss of thousands of lives of our compatriots

and the widespread destruction of basic infrastructures, property, natural resources and the environment.

The damage inflicted by the tragedy also created new challenges and opportunities, encouraging us to redouble our efforts and to seek the necessary unity, joining together without distinction, in efforts to move forward. In May this year, therefore, the Consultative Group for the Reconstruction and Transformation of Central America, convened initially by the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington in December 1998 as a result of Hurricane Mitch, met in Stockholm and offered Nicaragua phased global support amounting to $2.5 billion for a period of three to four years. This significant support will enable us to give urgent attention to social programmes and infrastructure projects, with priority being given to the sensitive areas of health, education and housing, as well as to plans for assistance to small producers and agricultural workers affected by Hurricane Mitch.

The disciplined implementation of the ESAF programme and the new set of circumstances ushered in by the hurricane, led last week to an event that happily coincided with the celebration of our national independence — a resolution of the International Monetary Fund by which it associated itself with the resolution previously adopted by the World Bank, thereby opening the door to Nicaragua for its inclusion in the HIPC initiative. This extraordinary event, which will mean a substantial pardoning of our external debt, was a historical watershed, opening up a fresh chapter in our new independence, which will transform the economic and social reality of our people, making it possible for them to enter the new century relieved of an unbearable burden inherited from the past, with renewed vigour, great potential and realistic optimism for a substantially improved quality of life for Nicaraguans.

We should like to reiterate our eternal gratitude to the international community and to the multilateral organizations that have smoothed our path, enabling us to march together, shoulder to shoulder, towards a promising future.

Nicaragua appreciates the sustained efforts of the United Nations system. Those efforts have been expanded during this decade to incorporate the great challenges and main issues confronting the country, including issues concerning governance and local development, the promotion of a healthy environment, the reduction of extreme poverty, greater access by disadvantaged populations to public services, the modernization of democratic institutions, the promotion of population policies, the process of demobilization of ex-combatants and the search for solutions to property conflicts through dialogue. Likewise, we acknowledge the special efforts made by the United Nations with regard to strengthening the administration of justice and the penal system, and to the creation of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. It is also appropriate to emphasize its support for the prevention of natural disasters through overcoming socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

Working together with the United Nations, we have gradually been fulfilling the commitments of the Earth Summit of 1992 during my term of office in order to create the National Council on Sustainable Development (CONADES). We have also been making strides concerning the Conventions on Biodiversity and Climate Change, as well as participating in the major projects of the Meso-American Biological Corridor and the Biological Corridor of the Atlantic.

At the same time, we have been making a consistent effort in the demining of the border zone with Honduras, where the last war left more than one 100 thousand anti-personnel landmines in the ground. We thank the international community, and especially the Organization of American States and the United Nations, for the significant resources they placed at our disposal to undertake this delicate task.

As signatory to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we unreservedly support initiatives aimed at establishing an international mechanism for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We are also conscious of the grave menace to the security of our nations and to peace posed by arms trafficking, including trafficking in small arms, which cause the greatest suffering and loss of human life.

We join in the world crusade to combat poverty, whether that poverty is generalized, focused or in diverse strata of our societies. We are pleased that the last year of this century has been designated the International Year of Older Persons, who seem increasingly to suffer from poverty and neglect. We likewise reaffirm our commitment to ensure social protection, along with the redoubling of efforts to make more effective both the personal security of citizens and the security of their property.

I would not want to end without inviting the Assembly to reflect on the hopes of the 22 million persons who, at the threshold of the twenty-first century,

continue to lack representation at the United Nations — the Organization of universal vocation, where the most important decisions having to do with international policy are taken. The Republic of China — founded in 1912 and which has been an independent sovereign nation that maintains official diplomatic relations with Nicaragua and the other republics of Central America and other countries — continues, lamentably and unjustly, to be unrepresented in the Organization. This prevents it from participating in the work of the Organization and from making its valuable contribution in the various areas of international cooperation, despite the fact that it has complied fully with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, which was signed at San Francisco.

My Government has supported and will continue to support, with firm and fraternal solidarity, the unquestionable right of the Republic of China — whose exercise of full sovereignty over Taiwan for half a century is an unquestionable reality — to be incorporated as a full member of the United Nations. We therefore call anew on the international community not to deny that friendly, progressive and exemplary people the right to be recognized and allowed effective participation in this great forum, thereby affording it the well deserved opportunity of sharing with us its vocation for peace and its generous spirit of international cooperation.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pastrana *(spoke in Spanish)*: Allow me, on my own behalf and on behalf of my country, to express our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly for the current session. I am certain that, with a person of your qualities and experience at the helm, the Assembly will achieve the desired results.

I wish to express my congratulations and gratitude to your predecessor, my friend Chancellor Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for his efficient work.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedication and his contribution to the renewal of the Organization, and to reiterate to him our confidence in his work and his leadership.

This session of the General Assembly is the last one of the twentieth century. In the last hundred years, despite two disastrous global conflagrations, the nations of the world have come to the collective realization that all wars are civil wars, all killing is fratricidal, and that any minor conflict could, by escalating to the nuclear level, spark humankind's final war. It has thus become clear that in order to survive and prosper, nations must be united in a basic agreement on the prevention of war and the protection of human rights, with the preservation of the human race as a first priority.

Today, on the eve of the new millennium, after half a century marked by setbacks as well as by major successes, the United Nations must renew its mandate as a source of social and economic development and as a force for peace.

Here I would prefer to avoid pro forma statements and present instead some concrete and explicit considerations, as we believe that this Organization must be the catalyst of a fair and realistic response to the challenges of our common destiny.

No one could argue with the lofty principles underlying the Charter of the United Nations. Its unquestioned universality is one of the characteristics of the second half of the twentieth century. We agree that respecting the Charter must mean, above all else, applying those principles effectively, without interpreting them in ways that distort the purposes of the Charter.

Our collective experience of over half a century has shown that the proper application of the Charter of the

United Nations is indeed the best and safest way of achieving and consolidating the benefits of world peace. One of the Charter's cherished principles is the obligation of States not to interfere, directly or indirectly, in the affairs of other States, as sovereign equality excludes interference in the internal jurisdiction of other countries. It also implies complying, in good faith, with agreed commitments; observing the principles underlying them; and simultaneously respecting freedoms and human rights. This is a fundamental aspect of international affairs.

The founders of the United Nations — and my grandfather was among them — were not mistaken in their belief that international peace is based on the sovereignty of Member States. Nor were they wrong when, ruling out the unilateral use of threats and force against the integrity and independence of States, they envisaged the use of effective collective means.

Over the past year, we have worked with determination to put an end to the 40-year-old conflict in Colombia. We have reached agreement on an agenda for negotiations between our Government and the Colombia Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), the oldest and largest of the guerrilla groups. But as the world knows, we are negotiating in the midst of conflict, without benefit of a ceasefire, so the killings, kidnappings and attacks by the guerrillas and the "self-defence" groups are still taking a high human, social and economic toll. Achieving peace will require time, patience and optimism in order to successfully overcome the obstacles and doubts inherent in this process.

When I last stood upon this rostrum, one year ago, I outlined a new direction for my country: to work to put an end to the corruption and violence in Colombia. I must admit that the past year has been difficult; the challenges we face are complex. The most important lesson we have learned is that peace is a primary goal for Colombia. Not peace at any price, but a genuine peace that strengthens our democracy, preserves territorial unity and gives every Colombian his or her rightful place in our common destiny.

The quest for peace is not limited to dialogue and negotiation or to putting an end to armed conflict. Achieving peace requires much more than convincing the parties to sit at the negotiating table and reach compromises. It requires rebuilding a society and State in which the causes of conflict have been eradicated, which strengthens the State and helps to create the foundations of a stable and lasting peace.

We Colombians have taken seriously the responsibility of achieving peace. As our recent history makes clear, international support is also necessary for us to face our challenges. Colombia needs financial support from multilateral organizations, from friendly countries and from non-governmental organizations to complement my Administration's efforts. Such support is key for Colombia.

To this end, we have formulated a strategic package for peace, economic prosperity and the strengthening of the State; it is called Plan Colombia. It synthesizes our economic, political and social views and aims to defend Colombia from the threat of drug trafficking, to strengthen our democratic institutions throughout the national territory, and to guarantee the security of our citizens and the full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms. For that reason, we are counting on the solidarity and contributions of the international community.

Given the complexity of the process, it is clear that cooperation for peace must be carried out with the utmost caution. Careless actions can thwart these efforts. That is why we are increasingly concerned by the groundless rumours of alleged military interventions in Colombia, whose supposed purpose is to help my country in the struggle in which it is engaged.

I would like from this rostrum solemnly to state that Colombia, true to the principles that govern our Republic, rejects any foreign interference or intervention in its internal affairs. We Colombians will work to overcome our own challenges. These are times of cooperation, not intervention.

My Government also believes that the peace process is key in winning the fight against the worldwide problem of drugs. That immoral trade, which ruins lives, fuels violence, promotes corruption and destroys our ecosystem, must be opposed by all nations, by all available means. To that end, we must coordinate our efforts regarding production and consumption as well as the numerous links between these two evils.

Over the past two decades, Colombia has been on the front lines of this battle, facing down the drug cartels and their campaigns of intimidation and terror. In the process we have lost many of our finest citizens, to whom we owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

But as the major Colombian cartels are wiped out, the illegal drug trade has become a kind of hydra — more spread out, more international and less public, and therefore more difficult to defeat. To vanquish it requires a genuine partnership among the countries that consume and produce illegal drugs, underpinned by the principles of joint responsibility, reciprocity and fairness.

Increased efforts must also be made to confiscate from drug traffickers the money and property they have obtained from that illegal trade. In particular, we must fight the smuggling of industrial products to Colombia, which serves to launder drug money and ends up suffocating Colombia's industries. We must also halt the flow of precursor chemicals needed for the production of narcotics. And multinational corporations that benefit in one way or another should be held accountable for not taking the necessary precautions to prevent their helping and participating in drug trafficking through negligence.

There will be no peace in Colombia as long as the greedy businesses of drug trafficking and the black market in weapons continue supplying irregular groups. We are very concerned about the significant amounts of various types of weapons illegally entering Colombian territory. There is an urgent, inescapable need for all Governments to cooperate to control and halt this unacceptable traffic in death and destruction.

For the last two years, since the first shock wave of the so-called Asian crisis, the economy has been suffering the difficulties of instability and slow-down. This crisis has shown that no State, however powerful, is immune, and that the poor countries have suffered the most from its consequences.

The hypothesis that capital flows would promote accelerated and sustained economic growth has faded in the light of the facts. We have seen the growth of enormous sums of virtual money, whose uncontrolled movements have brought economic turbulence, unemployment, more poverty and even, in some cases, political instability. Latin America has become the most recent victim of the crisis. We must, therefore, give the most serious consideration and priority to the design of a new financial structure. This will be viable and efficient only if it involves increased resources from multilateral financial institutions. It must also involve support mechanisms to lessen the social impact of structural adjustment programmes, especially those affecting the most vulnerable. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, said so when he spoke about the need to respect essential values to give a human face to the global market.

At the end of the twentieth century, we are moving into an era of powerful changes, accompanied by worrisome tensions. Globalization is deepening, but it coexists with forces that encourage fragmentation. As the peace processes move forward in many regions, new violence explodes in others. Wealth is expanding to unprecedented levels, but alienation and poverty persist. The technological means that promote interdependence and development also support networks of organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorism and arms trafficking. New struggles and conflicts have appeared, some using means for which the international community does not seem to be prepared.

Global confrontation is a thing of the past, as are the old plots resulting from strife and spheres of influence. These are times to think in terms of a real community of nations, as competing partners, but mainly as partners that share a common destiny.

There is, nevertheless, a perception that not everything is going well. The world is still not satisfied with itself. There are forces of destabilization and imbalance which put at risk the achievements made to date. Many millions still suffer from malnutrition, illiteracy, disease and exclusion.

We must, therefore, revitalize international cooperation to make the best of globalization, to distribute its benefits more fairly so that development and peace can complement each other efficiently and productively. Revitalizing cooperation is not an option; it is a duty.

After over five decades of existence, the United Nations has partially fulfilled its promise. It has been able to avoid the horrors of a new world holocaust. But the anticipated order, wherein the United Nations would guarantee peace, security and development for all peoples, remains to be built.

After the progress achieved with the Secretary-General's reform proposals, we see with great concern that the pace of change has slowed. Reform must be a continuing process. The United Nations must continue adapting ever more effectively to new conditions and realities. But this cannot simply take a form that is a product of the post-cold-war era. We need a concerted will. From various directions there are calls for the

Security Council to become more effective, to consult the spirit of the Charter and to balance the realities of world power with the just aspirations of those peoples which are least strong.

The system of collective security is one of the cornerstones of multilateralism. It is the rational response to interventionist or isolationist tendencies, the maximum guarantee of the principles to which we all adhere. Colombia reiterates its confidence in these principles of collective security and its commitment to work, decisively, with the different sectors of the international community in order to invigorate the capacity of the Security Council to respond to problems and crises in all regions. That is why my country has submitted its candidature for a seat on the Council for the period 2001-2002.

The time for simple reform intentions is past. With the arrival of the new millennium, the historic moment has come to begin anew real negotiations in the different institutions. We need to find genuinely universal paradigms to ensure that multilateralism leads to the globalization of solidarity. It is necessary to leave behind generalities or fragmented criteria in order to find a comprehensive vision of the United Nations system. A great effort of coordination is required between these institutions and the new international actors, including non-governmental organizations, and the promotion of a real association within a globalized but fairer system. The twentieth century has demonstrated that, alongside the horror and cruelty, there has prevailed what was once considered utopian: the United Nations.

Our paramount commitment must be to the human condition, the ethics and culture of peoples, solidarity and respect for others, regardless of ethnic, ideological, religious or any other considerations. We cannot give in until the day when the freedom and democracy proclaimed in our documents have become a universal reality. When we have liberated the human spirit so that it may fully develop its enormous potential, we will have laid the foundations of a world truly at peace.

Colombia, amidst its difficulties and problems, does not want to be, nor will it be, simply a witness to the changes of these times. Colombia is not a military or economic power. Nonetheless, it is respected by the community of nations for its unlimited and unconditional support for the norms and principles of international law. We offer our contribution — modest, but part of the common effort — to a better future for all mankind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio, President of the Portuguese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of Portuguese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sampaio *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation)*: Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Your election is a well-deserved tribute to the role that Namibia is playing in the international arena. Your human, professional and intellectual qualities will certainly ensure positive guidance of our work.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outgoing President, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the dedicated and competent manner in which he conducted the work of the fifty-third session of the Assembly. I reserve a special word of appreciation and esteem for the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the notable way in which he has been fulfilling his difficult task at a moment when so many and such complex challenges face the United Nations and so many hopes are placed on the Organization's capacity to act.

I address the Assembly still under the impact of the wave of emotion, indignation and revulsion that swept over the entire world as a result of the tragedy that befell the people of East Timor after the announcement of the results of the popular consultation on the future of that Territory, which was conducted in an exemplary manner by the United Nations on 30 August.

Anyone who saw the pictures of the Timorese on voting day — clutching their registration cards, waiting in orderly lines for the long-awaited moment to express freely their will — must have reacted with strong emotion and surely perceived, on those faces and in those gestures, the universal appeal of democracy, freedom and justice. The striking contrast between the example of silent courage and civic sense given by the Timorese when massively participating in the ballot and the barbaric acts of revenge that followed clearly reveals what was at stake in this process.

I do not wish to dwell on the history, unfortunately so little known, of the struggle for independence waged by the people of East Timor over the last 24 years. Nor will I recount the procession of horrors they had to suffer and, unfortunately, are still suffering to win their freedom. History teaches us that the birth of a new nation is usually a conquest by its people, achieved as a result of a painful process. The case of East Timor is not an exception. By their courage, determination and willingness to fight and suffer, the people of East Timor have earned the right to become an independent nation. I wish to pay tribute to them, as well as to their leader, Xanana Gusmao, whose human and political qualities have commanded the respect of all who have met him. And on behalf of the Portuguese people, I would like here to bow before the memory of all the Timorese who paid with their lives for the dignity of their people.

The events of the last few weeks in East Timor have rocked the conscience of the international community and force us to reflect on the responsibility of the United Nations, as the representative organ of that community, for the construction of a more just and humane international society. As universal awareness of the inalienable value of the dignity of the human being takes hold at this end of the century, an increasingly heavy responsibility is falling to the members of the international community to articulate principles and interests, in the knowledge that for interests to be legitimate principles must be upheld. That awareness demands, from all those holding public office, prompt and firm responses to moral and juridically unacceptable political behaviour, as well as to the humanitarian tragedies and cycles of regional instability that these provoke.

World public opinion, which takes shape before our eyes as a result of the globalization of the means of communication, expects those answers from us and has trouble understanding why double standards are so often used in situations where identical principles are at stake. We all know that the international community has not always been able to rise to meet these challenges. Suffice it here to recall the tragedy of Rwanda, the cases of the Sudan and Somalia, the delay in reacting to the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, and so many other situations of human suffering that, tragically, were inadequately addressed.

We should therefore pay tribute to the energetic reaction of the international community to the wave of violence and terror that struck East Timor in recent weeks and to the resulting mobilization of a multinational force tasked with guaranteeing the peace and security of that territory, protecting and supporting the United Nations Mission in East Timor and facilitating the humanitarian assistance operations for the people of that territory. Let me offer my thanks to all those who have contributed to this outcome and, in particular, to the countries that have been willing to constitute this force.

In this instance, and beyond the dramatic human aspects, the very credibility of the United Nations was at stake. How could the United Nations, having organized the popular consultation, betray the confidence placed in it by the people of East Timor? Although the reaction was not as prompt as the Timorese deserved and Portugal would have wished, the adoption of Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) shows the world that the Council does not remain indifferent to challenges to its authority, nor does it allow them to go unanswered.

Let this case be not an exception, but rather an example for the future. Swiftness of reaction by the Security Council is a condition of its authority and effectiveness.

Much of what has happened is irreparable and cannot be forgotten. I say this with great bitterness, and may I add that in this as well as in other cases, we cannot encourage a culture of impunity.

Nevertheless, the arrival of the multinational force in East Timor is opening up a horizon of hope, and now we must take care of the living and attempt to save whatever can be saved.

I consider the following to be immediate priorities. First, guaranteeing security in East Timor is the priority task before us so as to ensure respect for the individual rights of the Timorese and to allow them at last to live in peace without the threat of violence and persecution. Without security we will not be able to undertake with all

the necessary vigour and amplitude the urgent tasks of humanitarian assistance to the population of East Timor.

Secondly, we must channel humanitarian aid to East Timor with the utmost urgency, to feed, to treat and to provide shelter to the tens of thousands of displaced people scattered all over the territory; to take care of all those whose belongings have been systematically plundered; to bring comfort to those who have lost members of their families and friends and who helplessly witnessed scenes of horror that will be forever engraved in their memories; to reunite families — in brief, to come to the rescue of a population traumatized by an orgy of violence to which it fell victim.

Thirdly, we must attend to the situation of those Timorese, well over 100,000 of them, who have been deported to Indonesia or have fled the Territory and who are now mostly in West Timor. The continuous access of humanitarian assistance to those populations is urgent and indispensable, including by the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and other institutions for the protection of human rights, to safeguard the life and the dignity of the refugees and to ensure their unimpeded return to East Timor.

Fourthly, we must accelerate the transfer of effective authority in the Territory to the United Nations, as foreseen by the Agreements of 5 May, as a consequence of the result of the popular consultation held on 30 August. Any delay whatsoever would be unacceptable. It is also important to define a timetable for the complete withdrawal, in the shortest possible time, of the Indonesian forces in the Territory. That is the only way to restore peace and stability in the region and to lay the foundations of a healthy relationship between the future State of Timor and Indonesia, a country which we hope will be able to consolidate the democratic promise heralded by its current transition process.

Finally, there needs to be an enormous reconstruction effort in the Territory, which was totally devastated by pillaging, looting and destruction during recent days. To this end, the generous commitment of the international community will be indispensable.

Portugal has expressed its full willingness to contribute to all of these tasks. Owing to the responsibilities it has towards the brotherly people of East Timor and the unconditional solidarity that unites both peoples, Portugal has expressed, from the first hour, its readiness to join the multinational force. To avoid any delay — since every minute counts, in terms of lives and in terms of suffering — we agreed, while ready to participate immediately, to defer our presence in the force to a later stage.

With regard to humanitarian assistance and reconstruction for East Timor, we are doing, and will continue to do, our utmost. I would like here to appeal vigorously to the international community, to the specialized agencies of the United Nations and to the non-governmental organizations to contribute to this effort.

With the Territory under occupation, and the attempt at annexation by Indonesia never recognized by the United Nations, the people of East Timor waited a quarter of a century to exercise the right of self-determination to which they were entitled as the people of a Non-Self-Governing Territory, as prescribed by the United Nations.

Within the framework of resolution 37/30 of 1982, Portugal, as the administering Power of the Territory, Indonesia and the United Nations at last arrived at an Agreement on 5 May.

The popular consultation was agreed upon, with explicit reference, both in the Agreement of 5 May and in Security Council resolution 1236 (1999) of 7 May, to the resolutions of the General Assembly that have represented and continue to represent the Magna Carta of the right of colonial peoples to self-determination: resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XXV).

In spite of all the intimidation, the people of East Timor democratically exercised on 30 August their right to self-determination and chose, by a clear and unequivocal majority, their collective future, thereby acquiring, unconditionally and irrevocably, the right to constitute an independent State at the end of the transitional administration period that the United Nations will soon initiate.

East Timor is reaching freedom with wounds and scars of past suffering; but it is carrying the embryo of hope, and it will now, I sincerely hope, arrive, free of resentment, as a member of the community of States.

(spoke in English)

The question of East Timor is about a people and about fundamentals: human dignity, international law and moral and universal conscience.

In spite of all the terrible events of the past, let us salute, at the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the self-determination of East Timor.

Allow me to end by formulating a vow and a hope: that as soon as possible the General Assembly of the United Nations may hear the free and sovereign voice of Timor Lorosae.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jorge Sampaio, President of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bengali; English text furnished by the delegation*): This year is very special to Bangladesh at the United Nations. It is the twenty-fifth anniversary of Bangladesh's admission to this "Parliament of Man". I bring greetings from the people of Bangladesh.

It is gratifying to us that on this twenty-fifth anniversary, we have you, Sir, presiding over the General Assembly. You are a freedom fighter. You lead a country which was liberated in recent times, and yet, in its short membership in the United Nations, it has contributed so much to the work of the Organization.

We convey our sincere appreciation to Foreign Minister Didier Opertti of Uruguay, our President during the last session, for his excellent work. I would also like to welcome the three new members of the General Assembly: Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga. We sense their joy and excitement, as we experienced 25 years ago.

I convey our sincerest thanks and gratitude to the Secretary-General and to all Member States for their support and assistance in helping us overcome the aftermath of the disastrous floods that hit our country last year. The magnitude of the disaster was unprecedented in our history. The support of the international community was a source of inspiration and encouragement to our people in facing the challenges of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

I stand here today with pride and satisfaction. The Father of our Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 25 years ago delivered our first address to the General Assembly as head of Government of the sovereign and independent State of Bangladesh. His message on that day expressed the nation's gratitude to the international community for standing by our people in the darkest days of oppression; to apprise the international community of our great struggle for freedom and self-determination; to articulate to the world our faith in democracy, justice, freedom and human rights; and to spell out the basic elements of our foreign policy.

Despite the political upheavals in the country since then, none ventured to alter the foreign policy guidelines laid down by the Father of our Nation. We were thus able to contribute positively to the United Nations by serving in several important commissions and executive bodies in its system and participating actively in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We were privileged to preside over the forty-first session of the General Assembly and to serve one term in a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman carried the torch of an indomitable people to the United Nations when he stood at this very rostrum before the General Assembly in 1974 and said,

> "The noble ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are the very ideals for which millions of our people have made the supreme sacrifice. I know that the souls of our martyrs join us in pledging that the Bangalee nation fully commits itself to the building of a world order in which the aspiration of all men

for peace and justice will be realized." *(A/PV.2243, para. 2)*

Twenty-five years later, I am here to renew that pledge. In these 25 years we have seen the partnership between Bangladesh and the United Nations mature. From our early reconstruction needs for national development to steps for empowering people and establishing social justice, the United Nations has been with us. We have also been able to lend support to the strengthening of the Organization and have contributed in its efforts to eradicate poverty and disease, maintain peace and security and support the fulfilment of the rights of the oppressed and the subjugated. We sincerely hope that the development of cooperation between Bangladesh and the United Nations agencies in our country will be expanded and strengthened in future years.

Bangladesh has noted with great concern the recent decline in commitments by donor countries to the United Nations development system, and to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in particular. Bangladesh attaches great value to multilateral assistance as a reliable and trusted source of impartial expertise and urges donor countries to meet the commitments made in the Executive Board of UNDP for the multi-year funding framework, enabling countries such as Bangladesh to plan development programmes accordingly. Recalling the recent statement of the G-8 in Cologne, Bangladesh wishes to note with pride that it is already utilizing over half of the country funds available from UNDP for programmes relating to improving governance, which are helping us to address fundamental constraints to faster development. Now is the time for donors to recognize the commitment we have made and the success we have achieved by increasing resources for these valuable programmes.

Within months of his historic address to this world body in 1974, my father and the Father of our Nation, along with my mother and three brothers, the youngest one being 10 years of age, were brutally assassinated by a group of murderous and misguided military officers on 15 August 1975. Amongst those killed were my uncles, my two sisters-in-law, two cousins and a host of other relatives. My sister and I were the only survivors, as we were out of the country at the time. Coups and counter-coups followed one another at regular intervals, leading to military rule of one sort or another. I was forced to live in exile from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. I began to struggle from exile against the autocratic rule. After coming home in 1991, I stepped up that struggle for the restoration of people's right to vote and their right to freedom and to food. I was harassed and arrested by the authoritarian regimes, and several attempts were made on my life. But nothing could deter me either from my path or from my goal, the restoration of democracy. The movement grew in strength, and finally victory was on the side of the people. Today democracy has taken firm root in Bangladesh for all time to come.

We have strengthened the parliamentary system. Prime Minister's question time has been introduced. The session is televised and broadcast live. To institutionalize democracy and make it sustainable, we have ensured the people's right to vote by introducing the institution of a non-party, caretaker Government to be formed three months before each election. My struggle now is to guarantee the people's right to food; in other words, economic emancipation to a sustainable livelihood. I am driven by a desire to create a just environment, not only for my own people but also for all of humankind.

The creation of the United Nations was aimed at sparing the world from the scourge of another world war and to ensure that human beings are guaranteed their basic rights. During its more than 50 years of existence, it has stood the test of time. National and internationally, we have taken peace and development as two vital and integrally linked objectives. We have taken steps to foster peace regionally. Immediately after it came into office, my Government took the initiative to solve the Ganges water-sharing issue with our neighbour, India. We solved this long outstanding issue successfully in December 1996. I visited India and Pakistan following the nuclear tests in South Asia and urged that we all must do our utmost to deserve peace in our region and devote our limited resources to economic and social development.

An accord was concluded in December 1997 between the Government and representatives of the tribal people living in the south-eastern part of our country without third-party mediation. The accord brought peace after more than two decades to the strife-torn area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Peace now reigns in the area: the former insurgents surrendered their arms and returned to peaceful lives; all 63,000 refugees from across the border have returned; and there have been no incidents of violence there since the signing of the accord.

We have no illusions that the key to our development and progress is directly linked to investment in our people. Our efforts are now being directed towards transforming our vast human resources into a productive force. Our development programmes are targeted on

rapid poverty alleviation. We have adopted policies to strengthen the socio-economic infrastructure of our country. We have given priority to the various social sectors, including education, health care, poverty alleviation and population growth control, and we have allocated more than 30 per cent of the budget to the social sectors with the objective of poverty alleviation, empowerment and human development. Our programmes include shelter and sustainable livelihood through the *Ashrayon* programme, housing for the poor, health care, education for the poor, microcredit, old-age pensions, income transfers to destitute women and targeted poverty alleviation programmes. This effort towards the economic emancipation of the people is our preoccupation now: we want to build the golden Bengal dreamt of by the father of our nation.

We have adopted specific policies to ensure equality between women and men. We have promulgated laws and set up institutional mechanisms to promote women's rights, to ensure that they have choices and opportunities, that victims are given redress and that stern punishments are meted out to rapists for their deeds. The effectiveness of microcredit in empowering women has been phenomenal. We have also brought women into decision-making at all levels. During the last local Government elections, more than 14,000 women were elected to office.

In our foreign policy, we adhere to the principle of friendship towards all. It is a constitutional requirement to base our international relations on the principles set out in the United Nations Charter.

How do we address the critical issues of the new millennium? We consider peace to be a fundamental human right to be attained, sustained, promoted and carried forward at all times. Without development there can be no peace, and without cooperation, no development. There is no option, then, but to have genuine cooperation between the developed and the developing countries for the eradication of poverty and the fulfilment of the people's aspirations for development.

Bangladesh has been the coordinator of the least developed countries for the last two decades.

We believe strongly that special measures should be taken by the international community to help these countries in their efforts to develop and to participate fully in the global economy. Human rights is the essence of peace. Unless we ensure that citizens live a life of dignity, where their rights are secure, we cannot have a just and peaceful world. This is equally true for communities and nations. In our region, we have nurtured the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has taken many initiatives to improve the lives of the peoples of the region. At the subregional level, we are cooperating with Bhutan, Nepal and India in the South Asian Development Quadrangle.

The United Nations is the only universal body that deals with all fields of human activity. It has been a catalyst in many initiatives and has bettered the lives of people around the world. In the 1990s the United Nations convened a series of global conferences to address major challenges facing humankind. They addressed problems which were beyond the capacity of individual countries to solve and which called for wide-ranging international cooperation. I believe that the international community should ensure coordinated and integrated follow-up for effective and full implementation of the decisions of those conferences. In Bangladesh, we have taken concrete measures in this regard.

We need to ensure that the United Nations can continue to meet the evolving needs of humankind in the next century. For that, we must have an effective and efficient United Nations. I am happy that Bangladesh has been at the forefront of the adoption of these steps at the United Nations. In this regard, I would like to put on record our great appreciation of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. He has made remarkable achievements in the short time that he has been at the helm of the United Nations. He fully deserves our wholehearted praise and support.

There is no denying the fact that the world needs the United Nations. But we must remember that it is equally true that the United Nations needs the world. All countries must do their best to fulfil their commitments to make the Organization strong and durable. This has been the endeavour of Bangladesh for the last 25 years.

May Bangladesh live forever. Long live the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have the great pleasure of welcoming the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Bondevik (Norway): The tragedy in East Timor shows us again that when war and violence erupt the world community turns to the United Nations for the resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace. We welcome the Security Council's action to endorse the multinational force that is now moving in to bring security and aid to the people of East Timor. Norway will contribute with personnel and financing.

We look to the United Nations for hope and solutions, and for the protection of human dignity and shared values in a world of injustice and conflict. That is why the United Nations is indispensable. And that is why we, the Member States, must make use of the United Nations for peace and development, whether it be in East Timor, in Kosovo or in the Congo. In preparing for the Millennium Assembly, let us together address global challenges in a new spirit, with a new sense of purpose.

I would like to congratulate you, Sir, upon your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Norway looks forward to working with you. I also warmly welcome the three new Members of the United Nations, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

At the end of this century, globalization presents us with political and moral dilemmas. There has been remarkable progress in technological innovation and in economic and democratic development. But at the same time, while the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. Poverty and pollution, violent conflict and violations of human rights continue to haunt far too many people around the world. Combatting poverty, preventing conflicts, promoting human rights: these are the main challenges at the top of our common global agenda for the next century. We must ensure that globalization benefits all, not just the few, and we must protect the environment.

To achieve this, we need to strengthen the multilateral system. We must support the United Nations and its work for global peace, security and sustainable development. We must put the United Nations first.

Together we possess the knowledge and the resources needed to eradicate poverty. But still, 1.3 billion people live in extreme poverty. This is unacceptable, morally and politically. It is an injustice and an obstacle to economic and democratic progress. For all Member States, in the North and in the South alike, changing this situation must be our priority. And the United Nations must be the primary instrument. There is no alternative. Let us build a global partnership aimed at eradicating poverty. Let us start by mobilizing the political will and the financial resources needed to meet the target of cutting global poverty in half by the year 2015. It is a matter of political will; it can be done now.

National Governments have the primary responsibility for sustainable development and for meeting social needs. They must promote and protect the rule of law, human rights and democracy. They must fight corruption and pursue sound economic policies. There is no doubt that development assistance is most effective in countries where government is based on the principles of good governance.

The international community must also do more to create economic opportunities for the developing world. The following steps would have a major impact.

First, we need to increase the transfer of official development assistance from the North to the South. Norway has been well above the United Nations target for two decades. We intend to increase our development assistance further, up to 1 per cent of gross domestic product.

Secondly, we need partnerships that enable national Governments to lead the way and determine their own priorities. The private sector and business interests must be brought into the development process, as the Secretary-General has underlined.

Thirdly, development assistance and debt relief must go hand in hand. Creditor nations must now give the poorest members of the world community a new start. Norway's national debt-relief strategy is particularly designed for this purpose. We also support the

momentum created by the Group of Seven States to give highly indebted poor countries substantial debt relief.

Fourthly, the entry of developing countries into the global market must be facilitated, not obstructed. This must be focused on during the new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in civil wars, often with an additional element of foreign involvement. The root causes can often be linked to ethnic tension, as well as to inequity in the distribution of resources - economic, social, natural and political. During the 1990s, the activities of the United Nations have been more extensive than ever before in the conduct of preventive diplomacy, in the deployment of peacekeeping forces and in the provision of humanitarian aid to the victims of war.

But at the same time, there are critics who claim that the United Nations has failed. Of course, many things could have been done better, but we must not forget the many successes and we must not forget that it is we, the Member States, who are responsible for giving the United Nations the mandates to act and the money and the means to succeed. Let us not make the United Nations a scapegoat for our own shortcomings. Instead, we must make sure that the Security Council can fulfil its primary function in international peace and security. We must act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law. We must put the United Nations first.

This means enhancing the capacity of the United Nations for conflict prevention, crisis management and long-term development. All Members must meet their financial obligations to our world Organization and its peace operations. Creating common security is not cost-free. In particular, it is the duty of the most powerful members of the United Nations to set an example for others.

The United Nations must develop further its cooperation with regional organizations. As Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Norway has been working to build closer relations with the United Nations system. We need constructive interaction between all international, governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in peacekeeping and post-conflict work in Europe and elsewhere.

Kosovo is a tragic example of the complex conflicts that we have seen in recent years. Building lasting peace there will require the concerted efforts of all actors involved: the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the OSCE, the European Union and others. Our immediate concern is to secure a safe environment for all the people of Kosovo through a credible international presence.

We must promote integration between all the peoples and nations of south-eastern Europe. We must include everyone and isolate no one. This summer, at the Sarajevo Summit, we pledged to make the Stability Pact a key element of our efforts to ensure that democracy, peace and prosperity become firmly rooted all over south-eastern Europe.

At the same time, our efforts to build peace in the Balkans must not be made at the expense of the poorest people elsewhere in the world. They should not pay the bill.

The United Nations and its agencies play a central role in providing emergency aid to victims of war everywhere. Humanitarian assistance should be complemented by efforts to promote reconciliation, democratic development and respect for human rights.

Compliance with international instruments is needed to protect civilians in armed conflicts. We welcome the Secretary-General's report and the Security Council resolution adopted last week. At the forthcoming Red Cross Conference in Geneva, we must generate the momentum needed to secure the protection aspects of international humanitarian law. The early entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court will be a vital contribution to the rule of law.

We must focus on human security, taking individuals and their communities as our point of departure. Combating poverty is crucial to human security.

The proliferation of anti-personnel mines and small arms and the use of child soldiers pose a threat to human security. They inflict deep wounds on society and individuals. Recently, in Russia, we have seen how terrorism strikes innocent people. We strongly condemn such terrorist acts, for which there can be no excuse. International efforts to deal with these serious issues must be intensified.

We must vigorously pursue nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The principles and objectives set out under the process established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must be honoured. The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and ratification of the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) are crucial priorities. So are START III negotiations to lower nuclear arsenals, and so is a cut-off treaty. These are all crucial elements in a global agenda for sustainable human development.

When natural disasters strike, the poor are the most vulnerable. The recent tragedies in Turkey and Greece affected us deeply. Increasingly, man's pressure on the environment seems to be a contributing factor to natural disasters, which often cause extensive destruction in developing countries. We must step up our efforts to assist developing nations so that they become less vulnerable. In this regard, Norway attaches great importance to the special session of the General Assembly, to be convened next week, on the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Conflict prevention, humanitarian aid and development efforts must go hand in hand. We must deal with the underlying causes of poverty and need, not just the symptoms. Political and economic reform should run in parallel with humanitarian aid. We must close the gap between relief and long-term development. This calls for closer cooperation and the involvement of the whole United Nations family as well as the Bretton Woods institutions. The Secretary-General's reports on Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318 and A/54/133-E/1999/79) clearly demonstrate that poverty, underdevelopment and violent conflicts are closely linked: we cannot address one without addressing the others.

The Secretary-General has pointed to the need for a comprehensive approach and better coordination of conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building in the United Nations system. The Secretariat has already embarked on the process of implementation and follow-up. Norway fully supports the Secretary-General's initiative and is ready to provide practical and financial support for this important endeavour. We will set aside $3 million for the Secretariat to use for this purpose.

The situation in Africa gives rise to concern. Armed conflicts are hampering development in many countries. AIDS is also taking a heavy toll. There are positive signs too: we are witnessing the growth of democracy, transfers to civilian rule, free elections and economic and political reforms in many African countries. But poverty remains a major challenge.

Norway remains firmly committed to peace and development in Africa. We will work with our African partners for conflict management and development cooperation. We will work with the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, subregional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States, and others, to achieve our common aims.

The Middle East peace process is at a critical juncture. The vision that the parties had in 1993, when the Oslo Accords were signed, is still valid. The fact that Israel and the Palestinians have now embarked on final status talks is a very positive sign. Strong support for the peace process must remain a high priority for the international community. We must work together with the parties to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will guarantee prosperity and security for all involved.

The world needs an effective multilateral machinery to cope with common challenges. For the next century, we must, first, build a stronger United Nations in the fields of global security and economic and social progress; secondly, use the United Nations as the primary instrument for peace and development, democracy and human rights; and thirdly, tackle poverty and conflict prevention as the main challenges at the top of our agenda. It is up to us, the Member States, to make this possible. Together, we must make it happen.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Samdech Hun Sen (Cambodia) (*spoke in Khmer; interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is an honour for me to address this Assembly. I bring to all greetings and good wishes from His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia, and from the people and the Royal Government of Cambodia. I should like to inform the Assembly about the recent strides Cambodia has made and about how it stands ready to fulfil its role in the community of nations. I wish also to share with the Assembly some humble thoughts on global events of the past and responsibilities for the future.

First of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and on my own behalf, I would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. We wish him success in his important work and pledge him our full support and cooperation.

Allow me also to express my sincere thanks and admiration to Mr. Didier Opertti, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, for his benevolent leadership and guidance.

I also wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Royal Government and the people of Cambodia, to warmly welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations.

Just in the past year, Cambodia has finally turned a corner of history, putting firmly behind it the darkness of its recent past and emerging into the new dawn of its future. For the first time in many decades, Cambodia is now a fully integrated country, without rebels or separatists and without internal strife or conflict. The black chapter of strife, violence, turbulence and turmoil is finally closed. Last year we held open and free general elections on our own, assisted and witnessed closely by the international community, which pronounced them fully free and fair. After considerable discussions among the main elected parties concerning a common platform to serve the cause of the country and its people, a new coalition Government is now in place.

The last remnants of the genocidal Khmer Rouge have either surrendered or been captured, and are in custody awaiting trial for their crimes of genocide. We are firmly resolved to do whatever is needed to ensure an open trial for those responsible for genocidal crimes perpetrated in the country in the past. In holding this trial, we will carefully balance the need to provide our people, who were the victims of this genocidal regime, with justice in order finally to put behind us that dark chapter in our national history, and the paramount need for continued national reconciliation and the preservation of the hard-earned peace, national independence and sovereignty which we value most highly.

Peace, which was so elusive for many decades past, now finally prevails throughout the country. Cambodia has joined that important regional group, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and is determined to play its responsible role in regional and international affairs.

Cambodia and its people are committed to pluralist democracy and to upholding and protecting human dignity and human rights. We will be guided and governed to in all our efforts by the pursuit of the rule of law, which provides equality for all before the law and ensures that legal procedures and practices are the same for all and that the law is enforced through a competent and impartial judiciary system with built-in procedures for appeal and for rendering judgment.

On the economic front, we have pursued and will continue to pursue market-oriented policies, with safety nets for the vulnerable sectors of society until they are able to compete on an equal footing with others. Our principal goal is poverty alleviation. Our economic policies and practices, with generous external assistance — for which we are grateful — have resulted in steady growth over the past few years. Even during the financial melt-down in the region two years ago the Cambodian economy maintained a fairly even keel.

Moreover, with strong political will, the Royal Government is implementing its policy platform and reform programmes with a view to establishing a viable foundation for long-term economic growth and sustainable development. The key areas of the reform programmes include military and police demobilization; public sector reform aimed at strengthening democracy; improving public services and increasing their efficiency; enhancing the rule of law and respect for human rights; and economic reforms focused on maintaining macroeconomic stability: strengthening banking and financial institutions, fiscal reform, sound management of

public property and increased public investment in physical and social infrastructure and human resource development.

So now, as the century ends, we can say with confidence that we are firmly back on track as one unified nation — unified in our desire not to be drawn into the divisive factions of the past, but rather to play our part in the comity of nations for a better future for all mankind. We look to the future with great optimism born out of our own achievements in political reconciliation, compromise and adaptation placing the people's longer-term interests above narrow and short-term partisan gains, and out of our sound economic and social policies. We are both determined and confident that Cambodia will march ahead into the next century, and millennium, with renewed confidence and vigour, and that it will contribute to human progress.

This is a historic session which affords us all an opportunity — indeed compels us — to reflect on the past and plan our planet's future together. Looking at a wider perspective, we can see that humanity has witnessed unimaginable and immeasurably great change and progress over the last millennium. Progress in science and technology has helped us conquer deadly diseases, extend and enhance human life and improve the human condition. We have vastly increased our understanding of our planet and our universe. We have annihilated distance and improved communications to make our Earth a global village indeed.

Mr. Jusys (Lithuania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Much of our technological progress and many notable achievements have indeed occurred in the last mere hundred years, and the more we advance, the more possibilities for achievement arise.

Yet our achievements also mask many continued failings and appear to give rise to potential dangers. On a planetary level, we have vastly depleted our natural resources, mining and using non-renewable resources at a rapid rate; destroying our forests; depleting our oceans; polluting resources that are essential to our very survival, such as air and water; and driving to extinction rare species of fauna and flora, the value of whose contributions to balance and harmony in nature we have yet to understand.

We have acquired weapons of awesome power that can destroy all that we have accomplished and built. The technological revolution that we have witnessed in this century has gone so far that human morals have yet to catch up with it. We have deployed vast efforts and resources — intellectual, physical and financial — to achieve this tremendous progress in science and technology, but we must be sure that these accomplishments can be harnessed and will serve only to increase the well-being of humankind instead of destroying it.

The greatest concern of the coming century is that the revolutionary progress in science and technology achieved over the past 100 years has resulted in, among other things, the production of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction. As a result, there are now countless arms factories and a huge stock of modern weapons in many countries worldwide. Meanwhile, the modernization of armed forces — which is actually an arms race — continues unabated, in parallel with the many conflicts that are spreading throughout the world. Where will this situation lead us? This century has witnessed two great wars, unleashed by intolerance and bigotry, which caused more division in their wake. More and more lives are being lost. Social tensions and hatred abound, caused by religious and other differences. The world has reached a stage of complete disorder, where the rich and mighty impose their agenda on the poor and force the weak to follow them.

We must also stress that scientific and technological research, which has been conducted in a morally irresponsible manner, has turned our world into one of drug production, where most of the discoveries have been made by the developed countries but have had a destructive impact on poor developing countries. The world is facing many fundamental challenges, such as organized crime, drug and human trafficking, and so on, that jeopardize the future of coming generations.

In addition, the gap between the rich and the poor, the mighty and the meek, and the haves and have-nots have widened. We have lost the art of sharing and caring. Our numbers have multiplied many times, but science has yet to find ways to feed future billions and to stretch mother earth's capacity to sustain us. The aging of our people will pose immense challenges for future generations, when fewer productive people will have to meet the needs of larger numbers of dependents, young and old alike. Half a billion people live in abject poverty, while a few enjoy conspicuous comfort. The poor, vulnerable and oppressed suffer everywhere because of exploitation and neglect.

In our rapid progress and our daily race to achieve more and temporarily resolve problems as they arise, we seem not to pay attention to the longer-term future. The dawn of the next millennium is forcing us to pause and reflect. In the past, human destiny has from time to time been guided by far-seeing messiahs and visionaries. But we cannot afford to wait for another messiah to appear. Since all our religions teach us that there is a messiah deep down in each one of us, that is where we must search for answers. Let not the arrogance of our justified achievements lull us into inaction for the future.

World leaders have a rare and grave responsibility to carry out this soul-searching. It is given to few of us to undertake the task of charting the future as the next millennium dawns. We have to set aside our daily chores and power games and devote our attention to long-term problems. A few hours or days of reflection in 2000 will determine the destiny of the next thousand years and more for humankind and for mother earth. Let us for a time forget all our differences; imagine that there are no national boundaries or religious, racial or regional differences; and devote our attention to the most important and essential areas we must address in the next four to five years in order to set our planet on the correct course for the future. We do not need long, drawn-out academic conferences of every kind and on every subject to do this. We do not need volumes of position papers. We need only to trust our collective knowledge; the lessons of the past, which are immense; and our innate basic good instincts.

In this spirit, I would like to express Cambodia's strong support for the 2000 millennium summit of the leaders of all countries, where — without having to watch our sound-bites, pose for the cameras or please domestic audiences — we can talk of our planet and humankind and of what needs to be done. The overarching need is to ensure that the Cambodian Buddhist concept of "Dharma", or its equivalent in every religion, be respected, and that we do what past messiahs have enjoined us to do. In essence, we must lead a balanced and tolerant life, in harmony with oneself, with one's neighbours, with other beings, with nature and with the cosmos. Perhaps we have to visualize and devise new institutions and agendas, or significantly reshape and redirect existing ones, to guide us through the beginning of the next millennium.

We also have to set short- to medium-term agendas of a more practical nature. Of topmost priority is the need to eradicate poverty, a continuing scourge and stigma for humanity. We should devise steps to achieve this in the first 10 years of the next century. With sharing from the rich to the poor, internationally and within countries, this is not an impossible task. Already the G-8 nations have agreed to forgo past debts of poorer nations. This trend needs to continue, and future assistance should largely be through well-monitored grants rather than loans.

Secondly, we must preserve and enhance our environment and ecology. We have already seen how some areas try to dispose of their contaminated wastes in other places. It is necessary to stop the generation of wastes or to contain their levels at the source. In some cases we have to slow, or sacrifice current consumption, but this takes vision and determination.

Last but not least, we need to re-evaluate the roles of common institutions and focus on their positive aspects. The United Nations has served us well for more than half a century. It has done commendable work beyond its original mandate and has adapted to changing needs. It has been a platform for defining common goals. But we need to show more dedicated determination to rid it of functions, committees and forums which have lost relevance or usefulness.

Within the United Nations much has been accomplished under the bold and visionary leadership of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and we all pay tribute to his wisdom and managerial abilities. Yet some challenges remain including further efforts to curtail the burgeoning budget levels. Cambodia supports the need to reform the United Nations. The Organization and its specialized organs need to become more unified at the country level under the mechanism of the United Nations resident coordinator. In other words, there should be a single United Nations presence in each country, with specialized organs serving under one leadership, much like an ambassador providing an overall umbrella for all the activities of his country in a host country.

With this reform, our world body will be required to improve the criteria for recruiting staff and officials for posting in various United Nations agencies, especially for posting in member countries. Otherwise, they will consider themselves almighty gods, without any virtue, ready to violate the sovereignty of a member country, which has paid considerable membership dues to pay their high salaries. In this regard, Cambodia has had some experience in the history of its cooperation with some United Nations officials.

The Kingdom of Cambodia deems it necessary, on the other hand, to abide strictly by the United Nations

Charter and to reinforce the role of the Security Council in the process of maintaining peace in the world. We appeal to the international community to make further contributions to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), so that it can continue to provide development aid to the least developed countries.

We also think that punishing poor people of the least developed countries, by imposing sanctions and economic blockade to achieve one's political agenda, goes against the principle of humanity and respect for human rights and for the right to self-determination of the people living in the affected country. Therefore, Cambodia fully supports the demand of many countries for the immediate removal of the economic blockade imposed on Cuba.

Cambodia fully welcomes the decision of the Government of Indonesia to accept the multinational peacekeeping forces of the United Nations so as to restore and strengthen order and stability in East Timor. We cherish the strong hope that the multinational peacekeeping forces of the United Nations will effectively cooperate with the Indonesian Government to quickly and successfully create a peaceful situation for the people of East Timor.

In closing, let me once again appeal to world leaders to use the opportunity of the dawn of the new millennium to carefully evaluate our achievements and their costs, as well as the future perils that confront us, and to consider important steps to establish a new world order that will take this planet safely through the next thousand years. The lessons of the past should steer us towards ensuring lasting legacies for generations yet to be born. Cambodia stands ready to join in this global effort.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, Mr. Marc Forné Molné, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Forné Molné (Andorra) *(spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation)*: We are coming to the end of 1999, a date that many see as the end of an epoch, given the proximity of the new millennium. The imminence of its arrival invites us to reflect on the history of men and women.

It is with humility that Western nations, such as mine, consider the development of mankind, which well before our year one was recorded by other calendars during thousands and thousands of years, as *homo sapiens* began to create tools of wood and metal, began to bury their dead with dignity or to build empires and cultures ever greater, and also ever more ephemeral. Today we marvel at the mysterious paintings of prehistoric man, such as we find in Andorra and throughout the Pyrenees, or at the great architectural projects of ancient Egypt. Our culture, our crafts, our way of life — all these have certainly changed; but our intellect, though more cultivated and filled with more knowledge, continues to grasp at the problems of our existence in the same way, with the same hesitations — caught between superstition, cruelty and fear on the one hand and optimism and hope on the other.

In short, at the dawn of the year 2000 we remain essentially human and we can still discern in ourselves the traces of our ancestors who were born of natural evolution. However, the progress of human societies has so intensively transformed our environment that our era is intrinsically new and different from those that preceded it. This new world, so recent and so obvious to us that it appears it could not be otherwise, is the world of the new millennium. Globalization defines the spirit of the age. This phenomenon is of such importance that the General Assembly should reflect upon it, each of us according to his unique perspective. The universality of this international forum — where, because of the far-sightedness of its founders, all nations, large and small, have the same voice — makes it the ideal place for a sober reflection on globalization and its effects.

The nineteenth century saw the birth of nationalism, which, in giving cohesion to human communities of all sizes, mythologized its unifying elements, often to an extreme. Andorra is a State, the fruit of a juridical agreement that defined it, long before the coming of

nationalism. Our national essence is not based only on our language, Catalan, which we share with our neighbours to the south and to the north, or on other manifestations of modern nationalism. Institutions are the pillars of our community: a democratic parliamentary system that began in 1419, a culture of peace that has continued uninterrupted since 1278. Perhaps, since the Andorran fatherland is the result of institutional and political ideas worked out in a unique historical experience, born out of a pact, we can emphasize these ideas today in this speech so that here at the United Nations they can serve as unifying institutional elements, thereby promoting the idea that globalization should be shared by all in common progress.

What is important in the new millennium is to know how to orient this globalization with international criteria, so that a son of the Argentine pampas or a daughter of Gabon can equally laugh and cry at the same cartoon, so that their freedom and ambitions can be equal and equally unconstrained. For if their childhoods are no longer so culturally separate, the political and economic opportunities they have when they pass into adulthood should be equally similar.

Globalization is probably the greatest opportunity for humanity, but it will not develop its potential if it is not accompanied by both principles and political action at the highest levels which allow for the establishment of new "post-national" communities with different cultures but with similar characteristics, communities that together can work towards a world of peace and economic progress. This will never be realized without the United Nations, the indispensable Organization. There are no indispensable nations, just as there are not men and women who are better than others because of the accident of their places of birth. What exists today are the indispensable economic and political precepts that our parents, survivors of the Holocaust and other terrors of the Second World War, gave to the United Nations and to the other international organizations allied to it. This Organization, which many love to criticize, while it may be distorted or weakened by the weakness of its Members, is at its core the expression of one of the greatest moments of the soul of humanity.

The political power of the United Nations comes from the defence of the rights of man and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Its power in the economic sphere is based on an ethical cry for development. I spoke before of the children of the pampas or of Gabon, as I might speak of children of the American Midwest or of East Asia or the French Pyrenees or the Arab peninsula. Many of these boys and girls will grow up with the same aspirations, instilled in them by a global culture, but once the age of adulthood is reached the possibilities for the exploitation of their potentials is not the same, and in this great injustice lie the seeds of new wars, exploitations and corruptions. For many of these children globalization has little meaning.

We cannot turn our backs on the fact that 20 per cent of mankind lives in conditions of extreme poverty, and that many millions of others are very close to this state. What does global culture represent for all of these people? Perhaps simply a mirage of all that they might have had and taken pleasure in had they been born citizens of a richer country. The world has today more that 1.5 billion people who lack access to potable water and basic sanitation facilities and who are largely illiterate. What kind of global community will we be creating if these numbers do nothing but rise? The United Nations indicated what needed to take place after the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. That conference traced a path that we have begun to follow, but that must now be followed with a firmer step. Why do we not, in the decades to come, try to apply the desires expressed in United Nations policy to economic organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank? We must do this. Otherwise, globalization cannot be any more than it is now: a dictatorship of the financial world over people and their legitimate representatives.

A discussion of the responsibility of those States that administer economic aid returns us to the questions of political rights, the advancement of democracy, the transparency of the political and economic process and the consolidation of the rule of law. Models exist, and if they have been developed in specific nations of the earth, these models do not carry any copyright. Human communities are either free or not; there exists no other possibility. True democracy, the freedom to choose the people to administer the public good through regular elections, is the only form of democracy that can be defended. Today, with the information we have at our fingertips, nobody should dare defend tyranny by resorting to cultural arguments. During the first years of the new century, it will be necessary to keep alive the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so that people everywhere are educated in the social responsibility of the individual and so that democracy is accepted as the only natural form of governance for all regimes.

The recent conflict in East Timor is a good example of the opportunities as well as the dangers that the United Nations has before it. On the one hand, we find ourselves facing a long but productive process, in which a popular vote accepted by all the parties will lead towards an unequivocal resolution of a long-standing problem. On the other hand, once this democratic process was effectively carried out, violence broke out, and now we must react quickly in order to stop the massacre. The United Nations capacity for reaction and the mobilization of the forces of the States that compose it is therefore essential. Here is the third aspect of the United Nations that must become more effective than it is at present. Peacekeeping must be conducted using more powerful and better organized mechanisms of intervention that allow for rapid action and guarantee the effective conversion of words into deeds.

Globalization, a current reality, presents both opportunities and dangers. In order for it to be a tool of progress, it must be accompanied by a system that is both political — involving democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights — and economic — involving the goal of the eradication of poverty and encouragement of development. Support for the system depends on the United Nations having a real capacity for intervention so that peacekeeping is more effective. This was the point of departure for my series of observations. I can guarantee that Andorra, a small State that has been a United Nations Member only since 1993, will make every effort so that the desire to make the United Nations an instrument for positive globalization is not in vain. We are making increasing efforts within the Organization.

Andorra's active participation in the Rome Conference to establish an international criminal court, where it was the second State, after Italy, to sign the Statute, which begins with words written by Andorra well illustrates the efforts of my country to aid and reinforce the rule of law in the world.

I have the pleasure to announce to the Assembly today that once the juridical analysis and translation from Catalan has been completed, my Government will give to the Consell General, our Parliament, a copy of the Statute for ratification. We hope, therefore, shortly to be one of the States that will permit the International Criminal Court (ICC) to become a reality by being one of the first countries to ratify the Statute for its entry into force. Another small European State, San Marino, preceded us towards this goal and we congratulate it on its speed and support for the ICC.

The work of Andorra in the United Nations concerning the rights of man continues to occupy a special place in this fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. In particular, our delegation will follow with interest the work of the Commission on Human Rights during its meetings in Geneva. Andorra's desire to mark its opposition to the death penalty as punishment for a crime will again be expressed. We will also insist on the need to teach human rights to children, as is emphasized in Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We will also work this year on other United Nations Conventions concerning human rights to which Andorra has committed itself to adhere pending internal proceedings.

The year 2001, as a result of the internal rotation of the Western Group, will allow Andorra to be a member of the Economic and Social Council. This represents an important goal for us in our international life, and we are pleased to inform the Assembly that Andorra has started its preparatory work for its presence in this organ, so important to the United Nations. The deliberations of the next session of the Economic and Social Council which will take place in New York in the year 2000. For the session to take place in 2001 in Geneva, where we will participate as full members, the recent extension of our Permanent Mission to the Geneva Headquarters will assure our being able to carefully follow the proceedings. To this end, I have asked our Permanent Representative to establish at this session which of the members of his team, and in what capacity, will be responsible for the Economic and Social Council in 2001 for Andorra. This preparation will ensure that our contribution will measure up to the noble work of the Council, notably in the war against poverty.

Still on the economic plane, Andorra's candidature for the World Trade Organization represents one of the most important current challenges for my country, alongside the relationship we are exploring with our neighbours in the European Union. As a small State which tries to understand its economic opportunities, we find the flows of global commerce, and our participation in them, of particular interest.

In 1998 each Andorran gave around $6 to our annual budget for contributions to the United Nations: this is the per capita figure for the Andorran contribution to the Organization. I am aware that it is not an enormous contribution, but it is much greater than that which each inhabitant of the biggest countries with a high income pays or should pay. A good part of this figure

was for voluntary contributions towards disarmament. An exhibition on children and small arms opened recently. Prepared by the Department of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and sponsored by Andorra, it will move to different sites in the world to raise consciousness concerning the tragedy brought about by the presence of small arms in areas of conflict, especially for the young. We have also made contributions towards programmes designed to collect small arms in some of those countries that suffer from an infestation of this plague. My country intends to continue to contribute to initiatives such as these in order to express our solidarity with the actions for peace of the United Nations. It is right that a small country such as mine, which has been blessed by 721 years of uninterrupted peace should participate in the United Nations in those acts which bring about a culture of peace.

The last time I visited the Headquarters of the United Nations, during May of last year, I did so to present a programme of computerization for the archives of the Group of Western European and Other States to the high-level working group on informatics. I am happy that the diplomatic mission of a small State such as ours can bring about the realization of this project, aided by the National Computer Science Centre of Andorra. The server computers installed at the Mission function at a good rhythm and other regional groups have asked for information in order to establish a similar system. I therefore reiterate the offer I made last year concerning the cooperation of Andorra with any other interested regional groups.

The United Nations is certainly imperfect, but it is the best organization that we have to orient this unpredictable world of the third millennium towards a culture of peace and international solidarity and also along the path of development.

There are many labours left unfinished: the reform of the Security Council, the new tasks of the Trusteeship Council, the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, the increase in possibilities for peacekeeping operations, among others.

We have a great chance to change this world so transformed by globalization. Do not forget, however, that at the end of this century marked by the worst excesses of humanity, the United Nations represents our charitable spirit and at its centre there is not a machine, but human beings, albeit exceptional ones: the first among them, Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General; Didi Opertti, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, whom we thank with all our hearts for work well done; Theo-Ben Gurirab, the new President, whom we congratulate on his election; and many other persons who bring their individual beliefs to this common house for humanity. It comforts us to think not about systems, but rather about those people who, indefatigable, work for a better world. Let us therefore have the optimism to believe in our species. For I believe that, as the Nobel Prize Winner William Falkner said:

> "man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, The Honourable Mahendra Pal Chaudhry

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands.

The Honourable Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency the Honourable Mahendra Pal Choudhry, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Choudhry (Fiji): It is my honour today to convey to the Assembly the warm greetings and best wishes of the Government and people of the friendly islands of Fiji.

On their behalf, I congratulate the President on his election. He will be interested to know that his great country, Namibia, is grouped together with my country in the same pool at the Rugby World Cup, which begins in Wales next month. While we are friendly rivals on the

rugby football field, we are absolutely confident here that, with his extensive experience, and impressive credentials, we can all look forward to another successful session of the General Assembly.

We also express our deep appreciation and gratitude to our outstanding Secretary-General and to the members of the Security Council for their wise and able stewardship of the United Nations over the past year.

The priority challenge for the international community continues to be to help ensure that there is freedom and justice and peace and prosperity in every part of our common habitat — the good planet Earth.

I trust that this session of the General Assembly will focus particular attention on specific issues that bear directly on our collective responsibility, as Member States of the United Nations, in promoting peace, security and development to make our good planet Earth a better and safer place for all its citizens.

In this regard, I wish to acknowledge the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for its foresight in giving the people of East Timor the freedom to choose their political future. Now that they have freely made their choice, we in Fiji join other States Members of the United Nations in appealing to the Government of Indonesia to facilitate the peaceful and orderly transition of East Timor to full nationhood and independence.

To enable this, it is crucially important that every effort is made to restore law and order and ensure the provision and maintenance of effective security measures to allow the people of East Timor to return to their homes. The tragic situation which has arisen there, with the loss of hundreds of lives, need not have occurred had the Indonesian Government and the military properly exercised their responsibility to deal decisively with the unlawful armed elements.

As a member of the United Nations family, Fiji stands ready to participate alongside other Member States in the United Nations peacekeeping force in East Timor in laying the foundation for lasting peace in that new nation. Also, we call on the international community to provide tangible assistance to enable East Timor to put an effective Government in place and rebuild its shattered economy.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm Fiji's continuing commitment to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, Sinai, Bosnia and Kosovo. Within our own Pacific island region, we remain ready to support and assist Papua New Guinea in bringing permanent peace to Bougainville, as part of a South Pacific Forum regional peace mission. In the Solomon Islands, we are ready and prepared to cooperate with the Government, at the invitation and under the aegis of the Commonwealth of Nations, in restoring peace and promoting goodwill and understanding among the people of this very important neighbouring State. In all this, the guiding principle of Fiji's participation is respect for the sovereign rights of the countries concerned and maintenance of the democratic rights and freedoms of their peoples.

Making sacrifices in serving our common interests is nothing foreign to us in Fiji, for it is through the willingness of the various constituent communities in our multi-ethnic and multicultural society to make sacrifices in order to safeguard our collective future that we have succeeded in constructing an agreed constitutional framework for peace and prosperity in our country. We unanimously adopted a new Constitution in July 1997 to replace the racially weighted Constitution imposed on our people following the military coups of 1987. Under the new Constitution, general elections were held in May this year. In those free and democratic elections, my Government was elected into office with a clear, overwhelming majority. We decisively won the elections because our People's Coalition Party promised policies on development that were focused specifically on addressing the basic needs of the people — the need for regular income through jobs or business opportunity; the need for better education and health services; a safe and clean water supply; electricity; good standard of housing at affordable prices; safe streets and neighbourhoods; and a clean and healthy environment. But above all these was the emphasis we placed on the critical need to bring relief and assistance to the poor, to those on low incomes and to the growing number of those who, through no fault of their own, live in dire poverty.

Unemployment and poverty can be countered effectively only when people have the opportunity, through development, to apply their God-given talents and ability fully. To promote development we need sustained economic growth, but growth that creates employment and opportunities for a wide cross-section of society: growth that creates wealth for only a few and does not reach the masses that live in grinding poverty cannot be regarded as being for the national good. We therefore need to promote economic growth for human development: it must be regarded as the right of every citizen in any society to share in the benefits of growth,

development and progress — benefits not just in the form of material well-being, but also in the improved quality of life through self-fulfilment and the contentment that comes from service to others and love of one's neighbours and fellow citizens.

And so it is with the global community. The promotion of freer international trade for greater growth and prosperity must be pursued with a strong sense of economic and social justice. At international gatherings such as this, we hear high-sounding platitudes and promises of international arrangements that would favour all nations. Such are the kinds of promises about gains from free trade that we hear from the World Trade Organization. In reality, however, opportunities are never the same, let alone equal, given that conditions and circumstances are different, varying from country to country. It is not surprising, therefore, that international agreements genuinely aimed at facilitating freer and increased mutually beneficial international trade have often been undermined and frustrated by unilateral decisions and actions taken to protect vested national economic and political interests.

Globalization and our growing interdependence must be accompanied by a strong and genuine international commitment — especially by those economies that dominate world trade, international finance, technology and industrial production — to consider special arrangements for the developing economies. The specific aim must be to create new opportunities for developing countries to earn higher incomes through their own efforts as participants in the global trading system.

This is why my country, along with others in the Pacific, African and Caribbean regions, are deeply grateful to the European Union for the special trading and other arrangements under the Lomé Convention. For us in Fiji, 300,000 of our total population of 800,000 are dependent for their livelihoods, directly and indirectly, on the sugar industry. But it is the sugar protocol of the Lomé Convention with the European Union which is helping to sustain the continuing viability of this very important industry, while enabling us to attain the internal efficiencies necessary to enhance our international competitiveness.

Similarly, it is the special South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement, or SPARTECA, which Australia and New Zealand maintain with Pacific island nations, that has been a positive factor in increasing Pacific island exports to these two countries. This Agreement has stimulated new industries in the manufacturing sector in our country, has substantially increased our export earnings and has helped create new employment for thousands of our people.

We are, of course, grateful for the development assistance we are receiving from both bilateral and multilateral donors. I recognize in particular our traditional donors such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the United Kingdom, the European Union, the People's Republic of China and many others, along with the various United Nations development agencies. This development assistance has been of immense value both in our economic and in our social development efforts.

While we deeply appreciate all this assistance, we also believe that helping us with increased opportunities in trade and investment is the best form of aid — aid to assist us in achieving higher rates of growth and progress through our own self-reliant capability. We would therefore welcome increased and stronger United Nations support for global policies that contribute specifically to increased foreign capital investment and assistance to developing countries.

We have been very disappointed by what we perceive to be the lack of genuine commitment by the international community, especially by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and the large developed markets, to respond positively to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This Barbados Programme commitment was made five years ago. I very much hope, therefore, that the coming special session on small island developing States will readily agree on a common regime of international support to assist them in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

In that regard, my Government welcomes the new emphasis by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank to assist developing economies in the eradication of poverty, in enhancing human-resource development through better education and health facilities and services and in the improvement and expansion of infrastructure to support increased investment in the economy by both foreign and local investors.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Nauru and the Republic of Kiribati on their admission to the United Nations. Their membership will no doubt add strength and resonance to the voice of Pacific Island nations in

this very important international forum. But like them, we in the Republic of the Fiji Islands recognize that, in the ultimate, the United Nations draws its strength from the quality of the commitment of every Member State to its basic purpose and mission, as set out in the United Nations Charter and other related documents.

Article 56 of the Charter reminds us all of our collective responsibility. All Member States are to pledge themselves to take joint and separate actions in cooperation with the United Nations for the achievement of its purposes.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that we are all endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. In my country, the Republic of the Fiji Islands, we have, in our new Constitution, adopted a number of very important fundamental principles as the basis for consolidating peace, unity and stability in our multiethnic and multicultural society. In Fiji we believe in the kind of multiculturalism that recognizes the value and contribution of each community and also that cultural diversity serves to enrich our society. But we temper this by drawing in and uniting all our citizens through focusing on our common needs as human beings.

We believe deeply and sincerely that it is the duty of government — indeed, of every government — to give equal care and attention to the development needs and concerns of all citizens, irrespective of race, religion, gender or economic and social status. These principles and this approach are working for us in Fiji, and I have no doubt that their universal application will also contribute to greater international peace, goodwill and understanding. Indeed, as we direct our attention to the beginning of the new millennium, and in particular the proposed millennium summit of the General Assembly in September of next year, let us look to it both with seriousness of purpose and with a new determination as a unique opportunity to rebuild the foundation for international cooperation.

My delegation fully supports the efforts of our Secretary-General to reform the Organization. The United Nations was established fifty-four years ago. To be meaningful, this reform must include a revision of the United Nations Charter to reflect the realities of today.

On the Security Council, this must include an increase in both the permanent and non-permanent membership, based on a more equitable representation of the different geographical regions. We also urge that the existing regional groupings in the United Nations for the purpose of representation in the various organs and specialized agencies should be reviewed with a view to reconfiguring them. This is, again, to ensure fair and equitable representation of the various geographical regions.

The countries from the South Pacific region, for example, are currently split between the Asian Group and the Western European Group. Australia and New Zealand are part of the Western European Group. On the other hand, Fiji and other island States from the South Pacific are members of the Asian Group. Such a configuration is not only discriminatory on ethnic lines, it is also, in these days, artificial and irrelevant.

I believe, therefore, that it is time Member States from the South Pacific should be allowed to have their own distinctive regional grouping in the United Nations. In proposing this, we are not asking for something that is totally new. In fact, this is already the accepted arrangement in such United Nations agencies as the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

With regard to its development agenda, the United Nations, we believe, must give greater attention to its responsibility, under Article 55 of the United Nations Charter, on the promotion of international cooperation in economic and social development, with particular reference to the needs of developing countries.

The World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen in 1995 agreed on 10 main commitments to be part of an international Programme of Action to enhance social development, including the eradication of poverty in the world through decisive national actions and international cooperation. We look forward to next year's review by the United Nations of this very important Programme of Action. As we begin the new millennium, let it be a challenge to the United Nations to recommit itself to the very important goal of promoting social justice and equity as a top priority in economic development, both within and between nations.

It is incumbent on all of us — the Member States, multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF, and the various United Nations development agencies — to cooperate in taking all appropriate actions to create conditions of stability and well-being, which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations.

As I have said, our membership of the United Nations and our attendance here at this session of the General Assembly reflect our commitment to the United Nations Charter on the maintenance of international peace and security. I urge all Member States to work together to encourage the resolution of disputes and conflicts through dialogue and the pursuit of consensus. And we must do this always with recognition and respect for national sovereignty and independence.

As men and women of goodwill, we have gathered here at the United Nations to reaffirm our common commitment to promoting a more peaceful world. But let us remind ourselves that peace is more than the absence of war or conflict. Peace can be real and enduring only when we all cooperate closely to create conditions for life to be lived in freedom and security, and with justice and dignity.

We must therefore collaborate and cooperate in promoting international trade in goods and services, financial and technology transfers and development that benefits all countries, big and small, developed and developing. And let us act in concert, and with responsibility, in safeguarding and protecting our precious national and global environment.

In concluding, I pray to the Almighty to bless us all, as children of His divine creation, with His wisdom and love, so that we may live together and relate to each other as brothers and sisters, bound together by mutual care and concern for one another.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Mahendra Pal Chandhry, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy. I have the pleasure and the honour also to mention that Mr. Amara Essy is the second former President of the General Assembly we will have heard today, the first being Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, who spoke this morning.

Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I wish to convey to my friend Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab how proud and happy I am to see a son of Africa leading the General Assembly into the new millennium. I congratulate him warmly. I am certain that his experience, gained as the representative of the South-West Africa People's Organization to the United Nations and in the course of a long diplomatic career, will help him resolve the complex issues facing the Assembly at this session. This is an honour for him and for the African continent. I wish also to convey my congratulations to the other officers of the General Assembly. The President may rest assured that my delegation is ready to work with him for the success of the work of the Assembly at this session.

I wish also to convey to the President of the Assembly at its fifty-third session, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, our thanks for the quality of the work carried out under his presidency.

I pay heartfelt tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and reaffirm the appreciation of Côte d'Ivoire for the unflagging and able way in which he is fulfilling the mandate entrusted to him.

My delegation welcomes the three new Members of the Organization: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

On the eve of the new millennium, the Organization must adapt to the new shape of international relations in order to increase its effectiveness in all areas, including that of the maintenance of international peace and security. Every passing day reveals the dysfunction of international society. Nearly 10 years after the euphoria born of the end of ideological confrontation, we have yet to put in place machinery for political, economic and financial controls that could lead to the peaceful world evoked by the 1945 Charter.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, we are obliged to say that might continues to prevail over right, that hotbeds of war continue to proliferate, that individual rights are often flouted, and that a large part of mankind has only a remote idea of social progress.

Yet the 1945 Charter remains timely; all that is lacking is the full implementation of the great principles it articulates. The faith of peoples in the United Nations remains intact. This obliges us to make a sustained effort to increase its credibility and strengthen its capacity to meet the challenges it faces.

For a number of years the Organization has been engaged in renewal. Working groups have been established to reform the main structures of the United Nations and adapt them better to the new international context. The Secretary-General himself is involved in this effort, in part by initiating reforms within his areas of responsibility. It is now up to us, the Member States, to work together to complete the process in the months to come.

We hope that the Millennium Summit planned for September 2000 will launch the United Nations into the twenty-first century. It is therefore of great urgency that the plan to enlarge the Security Council be completed. There can be no doubt that by increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent members, among which Africa will have to have its rightful place, we will also be remedying the lack of political visibility from which the Council has been suffering. The Kosovo crisis revealed the necessity of reaffirming the primacy of the Security Council and hence that of the United Nations.

Confirming the authority of the Security Council must by no means imply a reduced role for the General Assembly. This body, whose representative nature lends it great legitimacy, must be at the heart of the system, with all that this implies for its ability to set the overall course of the United Nations. But such institutional reform can be effective only if all States meet their financial obligations. By reiterating the validity of the principles of the Charter at the dawn of a new millennium, we commit ourselves to guaranteeing international peace and security for succeeding generations.

For the past two years the Organization has been paying particular attention to the conflicts besetting Africa. In his report to the Security Council of 13 April 1998 (S/1998/318), the Secretary-General identified the many causes of these conflicts. He reviewed the ways to promote peace, the most important of which is a development policy that can eradicate the seeds of violence. For their part, African States are making every effort to acquire machinery enabling them to avert conflict situations or, if necessary, to act.

Convinced that war is not inevitable and that the keys to peace are at hand so long as the political will exists, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has unanimously declared the restoration of peace on the continent to be its priority activity for the years to come.

But let us not delude ourselves: that goal will be met only if the international community, as embodied by the United Nations, is mobilized and if it firmly supports Africa's efforts. It is not my intention to disregard all that has been done by friendly countries — the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Japan and Canada, to name but a few — to explore new ways to promote peace and security in Africa and to strengthen Africa's capacity in that regard. Let me recall the establishment in my own country, at Zambakro, of a military training centre specializing in peacekeeping techniques, which is open to all African States.

Nor can I fail to mention the initiatives taken by the United Nations where the scourge of war is at its horrific worst, such as in Sierra Leone, or where it wantonly flays its victims, such as in Guinea-Bissau or in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Ceasefire Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, signed at Lusaka on 10 July 1999, to which all the factions of the Congolese Rally for Democracy have now subscribed, owes a great deal to the perseverance of the Secretary-General and to the persuasive labours of his Special Envoy.

To help our continent escape the spiral of violence, the United Nations has acted at every stage of crises, combining its efforts with those of the OAU and of other regional and subregional organizations.

Based on its success in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Nations has experimented in the Central African Republic with a preventive peacekeeping mission, which has thus far been achieving its objectives. The Organization has thus prevented that country from beginning a descent into the hell that the repeated mutinies of 1996 and 1997 seemed to prefigure and the political and social tension that followed. I am particularly pleased to say this because my country has sent a 235-member contingent consisting of a medical unit, an armoured squadron and members of the general staff.

Even though it is more complex in terms of the many issues in its subregion, the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is also praiseworthy. It has made it possible to build a momentum for dialogue that will ultimately prevail over the passions and divisiveness that have long been a source of conflict: this is no mean achievement.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes developments in the situation in the Middle East, including recent steps taken by the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Ehud Barak, and by President Yasser Arafat with a view to implementing a just and fair peace that would protect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and Israel's right to existence within secure and recognized boundaries.

I would be remiss if I did not mention all that has been done to strengthen cooperation in peacekeeping with the OAU, as well as with the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community. We must welcome the fact that the United Nations seems gradually to be overcoming the Somalia syndrome that led it to reduce its commitments.

The prospect of the Organization's soon deploying a peacekeeping force of 20,000 for the implementation of the Lusaka agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is certainly a harbinger of an increased effort of the international community to restore peace and security in Africa. But we should take care that this hope not be dashed, thereby strengthening the feeling, widely held in African public opinion, that our continent is subject to discriminatory treatment as compared with other regions of the world. What was possible in Kosovo should also be possible in Angola, Congo and Sierra Leone. The reference to the values of democracy and human rights that served as a catalyst for the large-scale action in Kosovo is equally applicable to African populations.

I am fully aware of the reluctance of the great Powers to become involved in complex conflicts whose local protagonists are often difficult to identify and tend to compete with one another, at very great humanitarian cost. Certainly, political prerequisites, especially in the form of ceasefire agreements, are necessary for the deployment of peacekeeping forces, but they are not insurmountable when the Security Council makes use of all the resources offered by the Charter.

The breathing of new life into the principle of peacekeeping operations through the provision of credible deterrent elements and resources should not absolve us of reviewing or of clarifying Chapter VIII on cooperation between the United Nations and regional arrangements. Too many uncertainties remain on the scope and modalities of such cooperation and the role that falls to the Security Council in this regard.

The Kosovo crisis and military intervention under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have only increased our doubts and questions in this connection. The promotion of the regional approach to collective security should in no way serve as a pretext for the Security Council's lack of involvement. By reiterating the validity of the principles of the Charter at the dawn of a new millennium, we commit ourselves to establishing better living conditions for future generations, including all the children of Africa.

Africa, of course, has little weight in world economic statistics, but it does have a potential on which the future of humankind will largely depend. It must participate fully in efforts to build a new world financial architecture. It is also important that, on the eve of major trade negotiations under the aegis of the World Trade Organization, the interests of the developing countries not be sacrificed on the altar of globalization.

I welcome the efforts of the Secretariat to strengthen the resources available for development and to harmonize the activities of various United Nations agencies. It was to that end that a development group was established to bring together the various operational bodies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund. The result has been improved streamlining of activities, more consistent management of aid and simplified procedures for funding projects. This represents progress that we can only welcome by paying a heartfelt tribute to the coordination of the assistance provided by UNDP, particularly by its resident representatives.

But this satisfaction cannot calm the anxiety provoked by the continued decline of official development assistance, which the statistics of the past decade show to be precipitous. Official development assistance has now fallen to below 0.2 per cent of gross national product.

We welcome the initiatives taken last June in Cologne at the summit of the G-8. These attest to a desire to increase assistance to developing countries, especially through significant debt alleviation. The cancellation of part of the debt of the developing countries, against the prospect of the opportunity for these countries to relaunch their investment policies, should allow for harmonization and coordination of the activities of the major international financial institutions. The multilateral framework will also offer the advantage of avoiding direct dealings between a given country and aid providers, which experience has often shown to be a source of misunderstandings that may hamper the smooth

functioning of national economies. However, decisions taken by the richest countries for reducing debt are likely to create disparities among the countries concerned, depending on what category they belong to. The definition of these categories may rely on economic criteria that, by definition, are extremely inflexible.

The question of debt is of grave concern to African countries, which, at the Fourth Extraordinary Summit of the OAU in Syrte, instructed the current OAU Chairman, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa to negotiate with creditors with a view to achieving a total cancellation of African debt. We hope that this mission, led by a head of State, will soon achieve success.

At the dawn of the new millennium, it is urgent that we define a global development assistance strategy and guarantee its financing. We therefore support the convening of a world conference on development financing to set precise objectives and emphasize support for education and social projects without, however, neglecting the industrial and agricultural sectors. I would make a solemn appeal to all donor countries to reverse the current trend and to increase their contributions to the United Nations system in general, and to UNDP in particular, so as to enable them to pursue their activities on behalf of our countries. I would ask these donors to base their actions not on short-term economic interests, but on solidarity.

By reiterating the validity of the principles of the Charter at the dawn of the new millennium, we commit ourselves to restoring dignity to every human being, because nothing is lasting if it is not based on mankind.

I wish here to express my Government's satisfaction with the activities of the United Nations and its two specialized Programmes, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, in our countries. The campaigns against these pandemics, especially that of HIV/AIDS, and endemic diseases, as well as the struggle against narcotics and drugs, are designed to end these two scourges, which directly threaten the individual and upset social stability. At the International Conference on HIV-AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 7 to 11 December 1997, Côte d'Ivoire and France proposed the establishment of a solidarity fund to mobilize the international community. At the suggestion of Côte d'Ivoire, this proposal was taken up by the OAU last June in Ouagadougou.

The actions undertaken by President Henri Konan Bédié, especially to protect and manage forests, develop and manage coastal areas, improve the water supply and adopt a water code demonstrate our concern to preserve human health and to protect the environment.

For several years now and in the context of more sustained economic growth, most African States have opted for political pluralism and the consolidation of the rule of law. These are the counterparts of improved economic and financial management through internationally recognized criteria of good governance. Much remains to be done and the situation varies from one region to another and even from one country to another. But the progress that has been achieved should be taken into account in major international negotiations. In particular, we must never lose sight of the fact that violence is born of poverty. Anything that can help to eradicate the latter is a source of hope to millions of men and women.

An Africa in peace and committed to the path of development is the best guarantee of a better world. This Africa must be united and free of small arms, trafficking and rivalry. It must be united.

An Africa at peace and on the road of development, is the best guarantee for a better world. Such an Africa must be united and free from arms — particularly small arms — trafficking and greed. Above all, it must be united.

During the OAU summit in Algiers, Heads of State and Government proclaimed their faith in the integration of the continent enshrined in instruments such as the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovian Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa, the Final Act of Lagos and the Abuja Treaty established by the African Economic Community.

Africa now realizes that time is not on its side; it is faced with rapid globalization, whose effects do not always seem to be in Africa's favour. With this awareness, the fourth special Summit of OAU Heads of State and Government, meeting on 9 September 1999 in Sirte, Libya, decided to create an African Union and a Pan-African Parliament. Next year, another special session will be held, also in Sirte, to adopt the text establishing the Union. For Africa can continue to exist only if the African Union becomes a true Power.

Côte d'Ivoire, keeping faith with this commitment, has started taking action to strengthen the existing subregional integration machinery, within the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Within WAEMU we have already established policies to harmonize tax rates, price statistics, with a regional stock market and transferable securities.

All these actions by Côte d'Ivoire, instigated by President Henri Konan Bédié, have no other purpose than to contribute to internal peace, peace in Africa and peace between Africa and the rest of the world. They are designed to buttress greater solidarity and to seek a more just world, with progress and happiness for each and every one of us.

The millennium summit will afford world leaders an opportunity to reiterate their commitment to the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter, which urges us to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, because the principles set forth in the Charter — dignity, the value of the individual, equality including gender equality and equality between nations — are immutable. They cannot be changed. They are absolute. It is up to us to act, and we must do so, for action is the very essence of politics.

Let us therefore work together to make real these noble objectives of a better future for us all.

The Acting President: I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, The Right Honourable Robin Cook.

Mr. Cook (United Kingdom): It is just over half a century since the then British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, presented the Charter of the United Nations to our Parliament. He told our Parliament:

> "We are seeking not merely good relations between nations but between the human beings within nations".

The concept he saw expressed in the Charter of the United Nations was revolutionary. That responsibility for the security, freedom and development of people does not belong solely to each State acting individually, but to all nations of the world acting as a united body.

Over the past 50 years, the United Nations has done much to discharge that responsibility. The United Nations and its agencies have led programmes around the world that have released the potential of individual human beings on every continent. We have helped double the literacy rate among women in developing countries. We have helped immunize 80 per cent of the world's children against some of the most lethal diseases. We have established the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the benchmark for freedom for individuals. And this General Assembly played a leading role in insisting on equal democratic rights, regardless of race, and in forcing an end to apartheid. Today the United Nations provides shelter and sanctuary to refugees in every corner of the world.

As we meet this week, United Nations agencies provide homes, food, welfare, health and education to 19 million refugees — more than the population of most Member States. We should take pride in these achievements, because it will help give us the confidence to tackle the challenges that remain.

But we must also be frank about where we have failed. We have failed to deliver peace to many of the peoples of the world. We have not realized the vision of our founders, of nations and peoples within them living in peace with each other. We have averted world war. But we have not averted a world with too much war.

That is why I want to support the excellent opening address by our Secretary-General by focusing my remarks also on what we must do if we are to replace failure to halt war with success in preventing conflict. The harrowing scenes we have witnessed this past year from Kosovo, from Sierra Leone, from East Timor and too many other places underline the urgency of improving our performance in preventing conflicts and also in stopping them once they have started.

I propose five priority areas for action. First, we must tackle the root causes of conflict, starting with the poverty that breeds it. War is becoming a poor man's burden. In the modern world, wealthy nations no longer experience the trauma of conflict on their soil. The soundest basis for peace is prosperity, and the best way we can prevent conflict is by promoting sustainable development. The forthcoming Millennium Assembly must make a reality of the commitment to halving the proportion of people in extreme poverty and reducing the number of nations in heavy debt.

Secondly, we must promote human rights and good governance. Development of a nation will be more rapid where people have the right to develop their full potential. Conflict is more likely where governments rule without the consent of their people.

Thirdly, we must curb the supply of weapons that fuel conflict. For decades, the United Nations, rightly, has focused on halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Yet in truth, in those same decades, the weapons that have killed masses in conflicts have been the most common of small arms. In Friday's debate in the Security Council, we will have the opportunity to take forward action to halt the illegal trade in small arms, to promote regional moratoriums on small arms and to limit arsenals of military firearms to legitimate Government agencies.

Fourthly, we must stop the illegal trade in diamonds and other precious commodities which pay for the small arms — and all too often the mercenaries — which sustain conflict. The markets for these commodities, especially the market in diamonds, are small and tightly located in a few centres. We must encourage cooperation with those who manage those markets to cut off the supply of funds to those who are promoting conflict.

Lastly, I strongly endorse the view expressed by our Secretary-General this morning that we must counter the culture of impunity. Those who break international humanitarian law, from Kosovo to East Timor, must know that they will be held to account by the international community.

The international criminal tribunals have shown what can be done. We must build on their work by getting a permanent international criminal court up and running with all speed.

But we will not always succeed in preventing conflict. We need, therefore, to be better equipped to restore peace when war breaks out. As my Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said in Chicago earlier this year, working out the conditions and identifying the circumstances when it is right in the modern world to intervene is the most pressing problem in foreign policy today. His speech demonstrated that Britain is anxious to play its full part in that debate. Our starting point is that our common interest in preserving the world from major conflict is greater than our individual interests as nations.

Globalization is the long and rather ugly term which is used to describe how in today's world we are interdependent with each other rather than independent of each other. We are bound together by our strengthening links in trade and investment, in travel and communication. What happens in one country can have a direct impact on the prosperity and the security — even the climate — of countries on the other side of the world.

And we are also bound together by the consequences of conflict. In Britain 90 per cent of the heroin on the streets of our big cities is grown in Afghanistan under cover of the generation-long conflict in that land. In central Africa, the upheavals of population sparked by the mass genocide in Rwanda have destabilized the region and caught up half a dozen countries in the conflicts that have ensued. Across the countries of Europe there are now several hundred thousands of citizens of the former Yugoslavia who have fled to seek sanctuary from the repeated conflicts there. Just as few nations can stand alone in the modern world, there are now few major conflicts which remain only an internal matter with no impact on the rest of the world.

If we are to respond adequately when conflict breaks out, then the United Nations needs to develop three strengths — credibility, consensus and capacity.

If the United Nations is to have the credibility to press the parties to a conflict to a solution, it must be more representative of the modern world. A small increase in the size of the Security Council would be a modest price to pay for the big increase in its credibility which would come from a more representative permanent membership.

But greater credibility would be pointless without consensus on when the authority of the United Nations should be invoked. Intervention must always be a last resort. We can all agree that the first responsibility for reconciling internal conflict rests with the State in which that conflict arises. But we also have a shared responsibility to act when we are confronted with genocide, mass displacement of people or major breaches of humanitarian law. To know that such atrocities are being committed and not to act against them is to make us complicit in them. And to be passive in the face of such events is to make it more likely that they will be repeated.

Credibility, though, also requires us to demonstrate not just the consensus, but also the capacity, to act. We often hear demands that the United Nations should do something. Let us be honest — the United Nations is nothing more than the aggregate of its Member States. The United Nations cannot do something except when we, its Member States, are prepared to provide the means.

We need to ensure that the United Nations has a sound financial base, which requires all of us to meet our assessed contributions in full, on time. But we must also ensure that when peacekeeping forces are required, they are made available. Britain has signed a standby agreement earmarking forces we are prepared in principle to provide for emergency peacekeeping work. Such agreements enable the United Nations to plan for emergencies with greater confidence that we can rapidly put in the field the right skills, with the necessary equipment. A score of other Member States have signed similar agreements. The more of us that do so, the greater will be the capacity of the United Nations in brokering a basis for peacekeeping deployment.

But in Kosovo we discovered that it was less difficult to put together an armed force to end the military violence than to assemble a United Nations police force to keep civil order. Today, therefore, I can announce that Britain will follow up our standby agreement with the United Nations on troops with a similar agreement increasing the number of United Kingdom police officers available for United Nations troops. This will include a commitment to a rapid response squad, ready for deployment at short notice when it is urgently needed. We shall also be establishing with the United Nations a flagship training course in Britain to train police from around the world to play their part in our joint missions.

I am conscious that the agenda I have set out is an ambitious one. But, in all humility, I have to say that it is less ambitious than the visionary programme set out half a century ago by the founders of the United Nations. As our Secretary-General said earlier this year, unless we can unite around the aim of confronting massive human rights violations, against crimes against humanity, then we will betray the very ideals of our founders.

In the modern world in which we live — the modern world of satellite communications — we know instantly when such violations are taking place. We have the resources and the mobility to move our assets quickly in an emergency. Modern technology has made all of us each other's neighbours. We now need to match that technology with an international doctrine that also reflects the modern world. And it must be founded on the clear principle that the only war we agree to wage is one in which our nations are united in combating conflict.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, His Excellency Mr. Jadranko Prlić.

Mr. Prlić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Allow me at the outset to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia, on his election as President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. His talent, skills and experience in international affairs guarantee the wise conduct and direction of this session.

Our gratitude goes to the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti.

Since the beginning of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, my country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, has achieved remarkable progress in implementation of the Dayton/Paris Peace Accords — progress, I might even dare to say, that is encouraging. The progress is visible in the further strengthening of peace, improvements in efficiency and the stabilization not only of common institutions but also of the institutions of both Entities as well as of local government bodies. This progress is also evident in the further promotion and affirmation of democratic values, human rights and freedoms and even in the return of displaced persons and refugees.

This progress has also been noted in numerous reports by authoritative international representatives and institutions from the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the High Representative and participants in the Stability Pact Summit. All of them confirmed that we have been moving in the right direction.

I do not want to suggest that the progress that has been made is spectacular and that we in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the international players involved in my country, are filled with great joy. Nonetheless, despite all the criticism and all of the shortcomings, progress is obvious, and that is a fact worthy of our attention, if for no other reason than that it is proof that Bosnia and Herzegovina is starting slowly and surely to move away from political, humanitarian, economic and almost every other form of stagnation. It is also proof that Bosnia and

Herzegovina is moving away from the state of deep internal mistrust, doubt and reservation which has for a long time existed between the two Entities and different constitutive people, and between their political leaders and representatives in common institutions. It is also a reflection of the state of mind and general mood among the citizens. I believe that it would not be too optimistic to claim that those positive results and developments are evidence of a higher potential and the growing will to find a way out of the difficult and depressing state in which Bosnia and Herzegovina was a prisoner for almost a whole decade.

Of course, there are still many issues which we need to work on regarding the Peace Agreement implementation and the implementation of the conclusions of the Peace Implementation Council contained in the Bonn and Madrid documents, although it also cannot be disputed that, unfortunately, we have reached unbalanced results in the two Entities.

However, this year the common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been working with greater effectiveness, intensity and coordination. Furthermore, 272,000 displaced persons and 343,000 refugees have returned to both Entities. However, the return remains one of the most difficult and painful humanitarian, economic and political issues, especially the so-called minority return. On different levels, the minority return is still being slowed down, manipulated, blocked and politically exploited. However, we are not accepting the situation. Minority return is not coming off our agenda; rather, it is increasingly becoming an indicator of success, demonstrating the capabilities and responsibilities of many political leaders from the local to the State level. The public at large — the voters — are monitoring and assessing this process daily. The return of refugees under conditions set by us is the barometer of reconciliation, respect for human rights and stability in general.

Reform of the judicial system has also been initiated, and it is aimed at the complete professionalization, modernization and independence of judges and prosecutors, in accordance with the norms and standards of the democratic societies of contemporary Europe and the world. The reconstruction of the Ministry of the Interior is also under way, as well as the modernization, professional training and education of local police. The recruitment of policemen and policewomen reflects the demographic picture of the population. Finally, there has also been progress in cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, although such cooperation is still not complete in the region as a whole.

Starting with the current school year, children in the schools of Bosnia and Herzegovina are attending classes in accordance with new programmes which reflect the present time and look to our common future. The school programmes exclude contents which, according to the common multinational commissions and international representatives, could represent a threat and a danger to the fragile confidence and understanding of the young generations.

Significant results have been achieved through a programme of economic and infrastructural reconstruction. But the restoration of industrial capacity has brought it up to only one third of its pre-war level. We still have a high number of unemployed and socially dependent categories. That is why Bosnia and Herzegovina will need international assistance for a longer period of time. However, that would be an investment not only in our future but in the future of everyone.

Activities are under way in regulating the sensitive but vital field of public information in both Entities. A set of regulations on the organization and functioning of broadcasting is in the process of being drawn up. Significant measures have been undertaken in the sphere of economic reform. In addition, the customs law has entered into force, the reform of the banking system and financial transactions has been launched and the first results have been achieved in the privatization of small enterprises. Preparations for the privatization of larger public enterprises and industrial conglomerates, which were an inheritance from the socialist period, are under way.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is speeding up its activities in these and many other areas as a reflection of its strong orientation towards the building of democracy and civil society, an open market economy and the enlargement of human rights and, by doing so, it is meeting the conditions for admission to the Council of Europe and getting closer to the European Union and trans-Atlantic institutions. Bosnia and Herzegovina has increased its cooperation with the European Union and North Atlantic groupings, at the same time benefiting from the various forms of support and assistance that those institutions have provided to us. In that regard, Bosnia and Herzegovina was particularly encouraged by the adoption last year of the European Union Declaration on special

relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Consultative Task Force established pursuant to that document has intensified its work in assisting us to overcome a number of technical, legal and organizational problems in the relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union. This has strengthened the functioning of State and Entity institutions and is enabling us to cooperate more successfully with the European Union.

For these and many other results which cannot be mentioned because of the time limitations, we have to thank the international community, which gave direct and indirect assistance, and we are especially grateful to the High Representative, who used his right to impose solutions when we in Bosnia and Herzegovina were unable to reach agreement through the normal democratic process. All of those efforts should warn us that the presence of the international community and its role in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still indispensable; it remains a guarantor that life in Bosnia and Herzegovina will move towards normalization. I believe that one of the most convincing pieces of evidence of the progress which we are witnessing in Bosnia and Herzegovina was its organization and hosting of the Summit of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, which took place on 29 and 30 July this year in Sarajevo. As the Assembly may recall, Sarajevo has hosted leaders of the States members of European Union, the Russian Federation, Canada, the United States of America, Japan, the Central and Eastern European countries, the most important multilateral institutions, such as this one, and, of course, the countries of South-Eastern Europe — the very members of the Stability Pact.

At that historic event, the common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the bodies and organizations from both Entities and many individual actors of all nationalities, confirmed not only their abilities and their capabilities, but also their belief in and readiness to make joint endeavours in their respective and common interests. I am deeply convinced that the numerous offers of congratulations and recognition which were forwarded to us on that occasion from the many prominent European and world heads of State gathered in Sarajevo were more than a simple expression of diplomatic courtesy.

As a unique contribution to the objectives of the Stability Pact, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have signed the border agreement, thereby removing this sensitive issue from our respective agendas. We are convinced that the Stability Pact and the declaration adopted in Sarajevo have opened new perspectives to Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to all the other countries in the region. This has given birth to a stable and definite solution to a series of catastrophic events of Biblical proportions and the fast recovery of peoples and countries that have paid an extremely high price for ignorance, for political and military adventurism and for flagrant violations of the norms of international relations and international humanitarian law.

The guarantees of the success of the goals of the Stability Pact — peace, prosperity and security for our part of the world — indeed depend upon the determination and preparedness of the European Union, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as other international organizations, institutions and regional initiatives. The guarantee of their accomplishment also depends upon the fact that the European Union and the United States of America have made the Stability Pact a priority in their new trans-Atlantic programme, and the European Union and the Russian Federation have made the Pact the priority in their political dialogue.

Bearing all of this in mind, we in Bosnia and Herzegovina are determined to embrace the Stability Pact in its entirety, to build on it and to accomplish our objectives through concrete contributions to its success, through our own initiatives and creative activities and through the development of regional cooperation within the framework of multilateral and bilateral agreements.

In that context, I wish from this podium once again not only to reaffirm the indispensable role of the Organization in the implementation of the Dayton/Paris Agreement and the Stability Pact, but also to reiterate my gratitude for all the efforts, contributions and many sacrifices made for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have witnessed in this past decade the capabilities and efficiencies of international organizations, and especially of the United Nations. At the same time, unfortunately, we have noticed some weaknesses and imperfections that endanger the role of the Organization as a vital and irreplaceable Organization for the twenty-first century.

I believe that none of us has any doubts that the United Nations is ready and able to pursue its noble mission to continue to strengthen and develop its purpose and ideals in the coming century. Even if the United Nations has not achieved all of its goals, it was able to safeguard global peace, initiate and make possible sustainable development, appease many injustices

worldwide and, on top of all that, to come to very clear visions about its own reforms.

The United Nations started reforming itself several years ago but has not yet finished this task. This path should indeed be vigorously pursued. I am of the view that if the United Nations had the courage to change the world, it can and must find the determination to change itself more quickly and to adapt itself to face the challenges of the next century. The millennium summit could be envisaged as a great opportunity for heads of State and Government of Member States meeting in the year 2000 to verify and adopt a large part of these reforms.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has thus far been to a greater or lesser extent an object of consideration within many international organizations and forums. The time and the context that dictated such a position are fortunately coming to an end. We are now becoming aware of the necessity of taking a more active, creative and responsible role in international relations. That is why we observe with a more critical eye the duties that we have taken on as a full member of the family of nations, but that we have not yet carried out or accomplished fully. Such an orientation is more a result of the fact that we feel more self-confident and are more and more trustful towards our friends and partners in the United Nations and other international organizations, forums and initiatives. An expression of this is the decision taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina to reduce its military expenses by 15 per cent in the hope of giving an example to other nations.

Allow me to conclude this statement by quoting a brilliant diplomat who once said, "People and States act wisely only after they have exhausted all other alternatives."

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.